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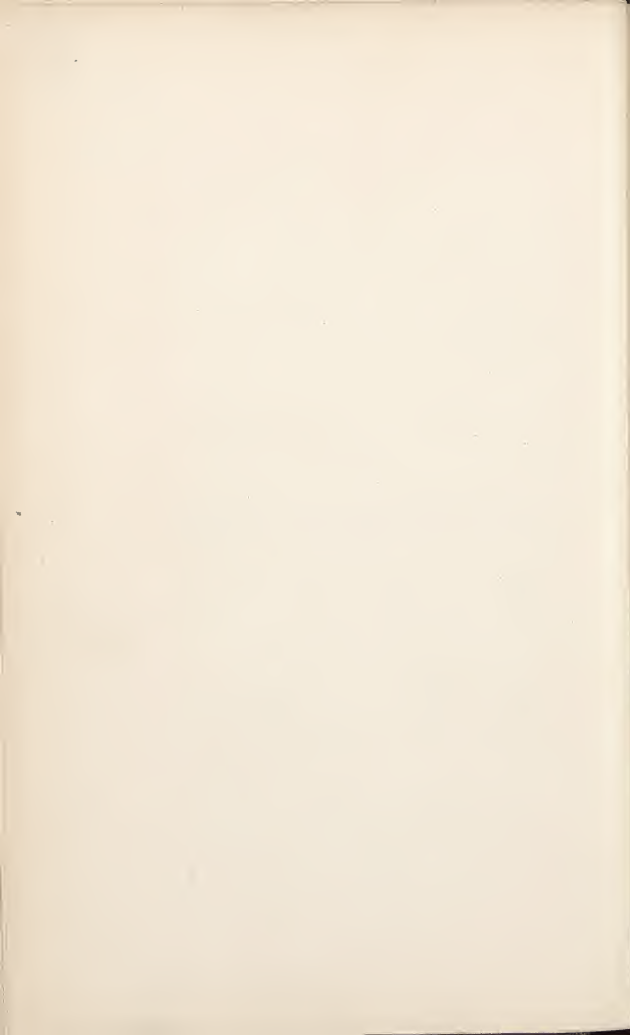








THE  
LAND BEYOND THE FOREST







SAXON GIRL IN FULL DRESS.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY MADAME KAMILIA ASBOTH, HERMANSTADT





Portrait of a woman



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THE  
LAND BEYOND THE FOREST

FACTS, FIGURES, AND FANCIES  
FROM TRANSYLVANIA

BY  
E. GERARD

AUTHOR OF 'REATA,' 'THE WATERS OF HERCULES,' ETC.

With Map and Illustrations

IN TWO VOLUMES—VOL. II.



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## CONTENTS OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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CHAP.	PAGE
XXVII. ROUMANIAN SUPERSTITION CONTINUED: ANIMALS —WEATHER—MIXED SUPERSTITIONS, SPIRITS, SHADOWS, ETC., . . . . .	1
XXVIII. SAXON SUPERSTITION: REMEDIES — WITCHES — WEATHER-MAKERS, . . . . .	22
XXIX. SAXON SUPERSTITION CONTINUED: ANIMALS — PLANTS—DAYS, . . . . .	33
XXX. SAXON CUSTOMS AND DRAMAS, . . . . .	45
XXXI. BURIED TREASURES, . . . . .	58
XXXII. THE TZIGANES: LISZT AND LENAU, . . . . .	71
XXXIII. THE TZIGANES: THEIR LIFE AND OCCUPATIONS, . . . . .	82
XXXIV. THE TZIGANES: HUMOUR—PROVERBS—RELIGION AND MORALITY, . . . . .	99
XXXV. THE GIPSY FORTUNE-TELLER, . . . . .	112
XXXVI. THE TZIGANE MUSICIAN, . . . . .	119
XXXVII. GIPSY POETRY, . . . . .	133

XXXVIII. THE SZEKELS AND ARMENIANS, . . .	142
XXXIX. FRONTIER REGIMENTS, . . .	158
XL. WOLVES, BEARS, AND OTHER ANIMALS, . . .	167
XL. A ROUMANIAN VILLAGE, . . .	180
XLII. A GIPSY CAMP, . . .	193
XLIII. THE BRUCKENTHALS, . . .	199
XLIV. STILL-LIFE AT HERMANSTADT—A TRANSYLVANIAN CRANFORD, . . .	215
XLV. FIRE AND BLOOD—THE HERMANSTADT MURDER, .	232
XLVI. THE KLAUSENBURG CARNIVAL, . . .	241
XLVII. JOURNEY FROM HERMANSTADT TO KRONSTADT, .	255
XLVIII. KRONSTADT, . . .	268
XLIX. SINAÏA, . . .	285
L. UP THE MOUNTAINS, . . .	295
LL. THE BULEA SEE, . . .	309
LII. THE WIENERWALD—A DIGRESSION, . . .	320
LIII. A WEEK IN THE PINE-REGION, . . .	326
LIV. LA DUS AND BISTRA, . . .	341
LV. A NIGHT IN THE STINA, . . .	353
LVI. FAREWELL TO TRANSYLVANIA — THE ENCHANTED GARDEN, . . .	363

## ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

---

	PAGE
SAXON GIRL IN FULL DRESS, . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
GIPSY TYPE, . . . . .	73
GIPSY TINKER, . . . . .	86
BASKET-MAKER, . . . . .	87
BEAR-DRIVER, . . . . .	89
GIPSY GIRL, . . . . .	108
GIPSY MOTHER AND CHILD, . . . . .	112
GIPSY MUSICIANS, . . . . .	126
SZEKEL PEASANT, . . . . .	142
THE ROTHENTHURM PASS, . . . . .	165
THE BRUCKENTHAL PALACE, . . . . .	200
BARON SAMUEL BRUCKENTHAL, . . . . .	212
STREET AT HERMANSTADT, . . . . .	216
SCHÄSSBURG, . . . . .	256
CASTLE TÖRZBURG, . . . . .	265
KING MATHIAS CORVINUS, . . . . .	282

CASTLE PELESCH AT SINAIA, . . . . .	290
THE NEGOI, . . . . .	296
THE PINE-VALLEY, . . . . .	327
THE CAVERN CONVENT—SKIT LA JALOMITZA, . . . .	364
CASTLE VAJDA HUNYAD, . . . . .	365
<hr/>	
MAP OF TRANSYLVANIA, . . . . .	<i>At end</i>

## THE LAND BEYOND THE FOREST.

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### CHAPTER XXVII.

ROUMANIAN SUPERSTITION CONTINUED: ANIMALS—WEATHER  
—MIXED SUPERSTITIONS, SPIRITS, SHADOWS, ETC.

OF the household animals the sheep is the most highly prized by the Roumanian, who makes of it his companion, and frequently his oracle, as by its bearing it is often supposed to give warning when danger is near.

The swallows here, as elsewhere, are luck-bringing birds, and go by the name of *galinele lui Dieu*—fowls of the Lord. There is always a treasure to be found where the first swallow has been espied.

The crow, on the contrary, is a bird of evil omen,

and is particularly ominous when it flies straight over the head of any man.<sup>1</sup>

The magpie, when perched on a roof, gives notice of the approach of guests,<sup>2</sup> but a shrieking magpie meeting or accompanying a traveller denotes death.

The cuckoo is an oracle to be consulted in manifold contingencies. This bird plays a great part in Roumanian poetry, and is frequently supposed to be the spirit of an unfortunate lover.

It is never permissible to kill a spider, but a toad taking up its residence in a cow-byre should be stoned to death, as assuredly standing in the service of a witch, and sent there to purloin the milk.

The same liberty must not, however, be taken with the equally pernicious weasel, and when these animals are found to inhabit a barn or stable, the peasant endeavours to render them harmless by diverting their thoughts into a safer channel. To this end a tiny threshing-flail is prepared for the male weasel, and a distaff for his female partner, and these are laid at some place the animals are known to frequent.

Those houses which can boast of a house-snake are particularly lucky.<sup>3</sup> Food is regularly placed

<sup>1</sup> Likewise in Bavaria.

<sup>2</sup> Believed by most Slav races.

<sup>3</sup> Likewise in Poland.



for it near the hole ; and killing it would entail dire misfortune to the family.

The skull of a horse placed over the gate of the courtyard,<sup>1</sup> or the bones of fallen animals buried under the doorstep, are preservatives against ghosts.

The place where a horse has rolled on the ground is unwholesome, and the man who steps upon it will be visited by eruptions, boils, or other skin diseases.

Black fowls are always viewed with suspicion, as possibly standing in the service of a witch ; and the Brahmaputra fowl is, curiously enough, believed to be the offspring of the devil and a Jewish girl.

The best remedy for a murrain amongst the cattle, is with an axe to behead a living pig, hoisting up its head on the end of a long pole at the village entrance. This, however, is only efficacious when it is the cattle or sheep which are thus afflicted ; and should an illness have broken out amongst the swine themselves, the only remedy for it will be for the herd, divested of his clothes, to lead his flock to pasture in the early morning.<sup>2</sup>

The skull of a ram is often stuck up at the boundary of a parish, and if turned towards the

<sup>1</sup> The original signification of this seems to have gone astray, but was probably based on some former worship of the horse, long regarded as a sacred animal by Indians, Parsees, Arabs, and Germans.

<sup>2</sup> See "Saxon Superstition," chap. xxix.

east, is supposed to be efficacious in keeping off cattle diseases.

A cow that has wandered can be ensured against wolves if the owner recollect to stick a pair of scissors in the centre crossbeam of the dwelling-room.

A whirlwind always denotes that the devil is dancing with a witch, and whoever approaches too near to the dangerous circle may be carried off bodily to hell, and sometimes only barely escapes by losing his cap.

As a matter of course, such places as churchyards, gallows-trees, and cross-roads are to be avoided, but even the left bank of a river may, under circumstances, become equally dangerous.

The finger which points at a rainbow will be seized by a gnawing disease, and a rainbow appearing in December always bodes misfortune. Pointing at an approaching thunderstorm is also considered unsafe, and whoever stands over-long gazing at the summer lightning will go mad.

If a house struck by lightning begins to burn, it is not allowed to put out the flames, because God has lit the fire, and it were presumption for man to dare meddle with His work.<sup>1</sup> In some places it is supposed that a fire kindled by lightning can only be extinguished with milk.

<sup>1</sup> Also believed by most Slav races.

An approved method for averting the lightning from striking a house is to form a top by sticking a knife through a loaf of bread, and spin it on the floor of the loft while the storm lasts. The ringing of bells is also efficacious in dispersing a storm, provided, however, that the bell in question has been cast under a perfectly cloudless sky.

As I am on the subject of thunderstorms, I may as well here mention the *Scholomance*, or school, supposed to exist somewhere in the heart of the mountains, and where the secrets of nature, the language of animals, and all magic spells are taught by the devil in person. Only ten scholars are admitted at a time, and when the course of learning has expired, and nine of them are released to return to their homes, the tenth scholar is detained by the devil as payment, and, mounted upon an *ismeju*, or dragon, becomes henceforward the devil's aide-de-camp, and assists him in "making the weather"—that is, preparing the thunderbolts.

A small lake, immeasurably deep, and lying high up in the mountains to the south of Hermanstadt, is supposed to be the caldron where is brewed the thunder, under whose water the dragon lies sleeping in fair weather. Roumanian peasants anxiously warn the traveller to beware of throwing a stone into this lake, lest it should wake the dragon and

provoke a thunderstorm. It is, however, no mere superstition that in summer there occur almost daily thunderstorms at this spot, and numerous stone cairns on the shores attest the fact that many people have here found their death by lightning. On this account the place is shunned, and no true Roumanian will venture to rest here at the hour of noon.

Whoever turns three somersaults the first time he hears the thunder, will be free from pains in the back during a twelvemonth; and the man who wishes to be ensured against headache, has only to rub his forehead with a piece of iron or stone on that same occasion.

A comet is sign of war; and an earthquake denotes that the fish, on which the earth is supposed to rest, has moved. Another version informs us that originally the world was balanced on the backs of four fishes, one of which was drowned in the Flood, so that the earth, now lacking support at one corner, has sunk down and is covered by the sea.

The Slav custom of decking out a girl at harvest-time with a wreath of corn-ears, and leading her in procession to the house of the priest or the landed proprietor, is likewise practised here, with the difference that, instead of the songs customary in Poland, the girl is here followed by loud shouts

of *Prihu!* *Prihu!* or else *Priku!*<sup>1</sup> and that whoever meets her on the way is bound to sprinkle her with water. If this detail be neglected, the next year's crops will assuredly fail. It is also customary to keep the wreaths till next sowing-time, when the corn, if shaken out and mingled with the grain to be sown afresh, will ensure a rich harvest.

Every fresh-baked loaf of wheaten bread is sacred, and should a piece inadvertently fall to the ground, it is hastily picked up, carefully wiped and kissed, and if soiled, thrown into the fire—partly as an offering to the dead, and partly because it were a heavy sin to throw away or tread upon any particle of it.

It is unfortunate to meet an old woman or a Roumanian popa, but the meeting of a Catholic or Protestant clergyman is indifferent, and brings neither good nor evil.

To be met by a gipsy the first thing in the morning is particularly lucky.

It is bad luck if your path be traversed by a hare, but a fox or wolf crossing the way is a good omen.

Likewise, it is lucky to meet a woman with a jug

<sup>1</sup> Archæologists have derived this word from *Pri*, which in Sanscrit means fruitful, and *Hu*, the god of the Celtic deluge tradition, and likewise regarded as the personification of fruitful nature.

full of water, while an empty jug or pail is unlucky ; therefore the Roumanian maiden meeting you on the way back from the well, will smilingly display her brimming pitcher as she passes, with a pleased consciousness of bringing good luck, while the girl whose pitcher is empty will slink past shamefacedly, as though she had a crime to conceal.

The Roumanian is always very particular about the exact way he meets any one. If he happens to be placed to the right of the comer, he will be careful not to cross over to the left, or *vice versa*. Should, however, his way lead him straight across the path of another higher in rank, he will stop and wait till the latter has passed. These precautions are taken in order not to cut or disturb the thread of a person's good luck.

Every orthodox Roumanian woman is careful to do homage to the *Wodna zena* or *zona* residing in each spring, by spilling a few drops on the ground after she has filled her jug, and it is regarded as an insult to offer drink to a Roumanian without observing this ceremony. She will never venture to draw water against the current, for that would strike the spirit home and provoke her anger ; nor is it allowable, without very special necessity, to draw water in the night-time, and whoever is obliged to do so should nowise neglect to blow three times over the brimming jug to undo all evil

spells, as well as to pour a few drops on to the glowing embers.

The vicinity of deep pools of water, more especially whirlpools, is to be avoided, for here resides the dreadful *balaur* or the *wodna muz*—the cruel waterman who lies in wait for human victims.

Each forest has likewise its own particular spirit, its *mama padura*<sup>1</sup> or forest mother. This fairy is generally supposed to be good-natured, especially towards children who have lost their way in the wood.

Less to be trusted is *Panusch*,<sup>2</sup> who haunts the forest glades and lies in wait for helpless maidens.

In deep forests and wild mountain gorges, there wanders about a wild huntsman of superhuman size and mysterious personality, but rarely seen by living eyes. Oftenest he is met by huntsmen, to whom he has frequently given good advice. He once appeared to a peasant who had already shot ninety-nine bears, and warned him now to desist, for no man can shoot the hundredth bear. But the passion for sport was too strong within the peasant ; so, disregarding the advice, he shot at the

<sup>1</sup> So in India the *Matris*, known also among Egyptians, Chaldeans, and Mexicans. A corresponding spirit is likewise found in Scandinavian and Lithuanian mythology ; in the latter, under the name of the *medziujna*.

<sup>2</sup> Surely a corruption of "great Pan," who, it would seem, is not dead after all, but merely banished to the land beyond the forest.

next bear he met, and missing his aim, was torn to pieces by the infuriated animal. Another hunter to whom he appeared learned from him the secret that if he loaded his gun on New Year's night with a live adder, the whole of that year he would never miss a shot.

Another and more malevolent forest-spectre is the wild man—or as the Roumanian calls him, the *Om ren*—usually seen in winter, when he is the terror of all hunters and shepherds. Whoever may be found dead in the forest is supposed to have fallen a prey to his vengeance, which pursues all such as venture to chase his deer and wild boar, or approach too near the cavern where he resides. His rage sometimes takes the form of uprooting pine-trees, with which to strike dead the intruder; or else he throws his victims down a precipice, or rolls down massive rocks on the top of them.

*Oameni micuti* (small men), as the Roumanian calls them, are grey-bearded dwarfs, who, attired like miners, with axe and lantern, haunt the Transylvanian gold and silver mines. They seldom do harm to a miner, but give warning to his wife when he has perished, by three knocks on her door. They are, however, very quarrelsome amongst themselves, and may often be heard hitting at each other with their sharp axes, or blowing their horns as signal of battle.



Also the mountain monk plays a great part in mining districts, but is to be classed among the malevolent spirits. He delights in kicking over water-pails, putting out lamps, and breaking tools, and will sometimes even strangle or suffocate workmen to whom he has taken aversion. Occasionally, but rarely, he has been known to help distressed miners in replenishing the oil in their lamps, or guiding those who have lost their way ; but woe to the man who relates these circumstances, for he will be sure to suffer for it.

The *Gana* is the name of a beautiful but malicious witch who presides over the evil spirits holding their meetings on the eve of the 1st of May. *Gana* is said to have been the mistress of Transylvania before the Christian era. Her beauty bewitched many, but whoever succumbed to her charms, and let himself be lured into quaffing mead from her ure-ox drinking-horn, was doomed. Once the handsome Maldovan, the Roumanian national hero, when riding home from visiting his bride, waylaid by the siren, and beguiled into drinking from the horn, reached his mountain fortress a sick and dying man, and was a corpse before next morning.

Ravaging diseases like the pest, cholera, &c., are attributed to a spirit called the *dschuma*, to whom is sometimes given the shape of a toothless old hag, sometimes that of a fierce virgin, only to

be appeased by the gift of clothing of some sort. Oftenest the spirit is supposed to be naked and suffering from cold, and its complaining voice may be heard at night crying out for clothing whenever the disease is at its highest. When this voice is heard, the inhabitants of a village hasten to comply with its summons by preparing the required clothing. Sometimes it is seven old women who are to spin, weave, and sew a scarlet shirt, all in one night, and without breaking silence; sometimes the maidens are to make garments and hang them out at the entrance of the afflicted village. Mr Paget mentions having once seen a coarse linen pair of trousers suspended by means of a rope straight across the road where he was driving, and on inquiring, being informed that this was to pacify the cholera spirit.

Some places, moreover, can boast of a perpetually naked spirit, who requires a new suit of clothes every year. These are furnished by the inhabitants, who on each New Year's night lay them out in readiness near some place supposed to be haunted by the spirit.

In a Wallachian village in the county of Bihar, during the prevalence of the cholera in 1866, the following precautions were taken to protect the village from the epidemic: six maidens and six unmarried youths, having first laid aside their

clothes, with a new ploughshare traced a furrow round the village, thus forming a charmed circle, over which the cholera demon was supposed to be unable to pass.

When the land is suffering from protracted and obstinate droughts, the Roumanian not unfrequently ascribes the evil to the Tziganes, who by occult means procure the dry weather in order to favour their own trade of brick-making. In such cases, when the necessary rain has not been produced by soundly beating the guilty Tziganes, the peasants sometimes resort to the *Papaluga*, or Rain-maiden. This is done by stripping a young Tzigane girl quite naked, and dressing her up with garlands of flowers and leaves, which entirely cover her, leaving only the head visible. Thus adorned, the *Papaluga* is conducted round the village to the sound of music, each person hastening to pour water over her as she passes. The part of the *Papaluga* may also be enacted by Roumanian maidens, when there is no particular reason to suspect the Tziganes of being concerned in the drought. The custom of the Rain-maiden is also to be found in Servia, and I believe in Croatia.

Killing a frog is sometimes effectual in bringing on rain; but if this also fails in the desired effect, then the evil must evidently be of deeper nature, and is to be attributed to a vampire, who

must be sought out and destroyed as before described.

The body of a drowned man can only be recovered by sticking a lighted candle into a hollowed-out loaf of bread, and setting it afloat at night on the lake or river: there where the light comes to a standstill, the corpse will be found. Till this has been done, the water will continue to rise and the rain to fall.

At the birth of a child, each one present takes a stone and throws it behind him, saying, "This into the jaws of the Strigoi,"—a custom which would seem to suggest Saturn and the swaddled-up stones. As long as the child is unbaptised, it must carefully be watched over for fear of being changed or harmed by a witch. A piece of iron or a broom laid beneath the pillow will keep spirits away.

Even the Roumanian's wedding-day is darkened by the shadow of superstition. He can never be sure of his affection for his bride being a natural spontaneous feeling, since it may just as well have been caused by the influence of a witch; and he lives in anticipated dread lest the devil, in shape of a fiery comet, may appear any day to make love to his wife. Likewise at church, when the priest offers the blessed bread to the new-made couple, he will tremblingly compare the relative sizes of the

two pieces, for whoever chances to get the smallest one will inevitably be the first to die.

Although it has been said of the Roumanian that his whole life is taken up in devising talismans against the devil, yet he does not always endeavour to keep the Evil One at arm's length—sometimes, on the contrary, directly invoking his aid, and entering into a regular compact with him.

Supposing, for instance, that a man wishes to ensure a flock, garden, or field against thieves, wild beasts, or bad weather, the matter is very simple. He has only to repair to a cross-road, at the junction of which he takes his stand in the centre of a circle traced on the ground. Here, after depositing a copper coin as payment, he summons the demon with the following words:—

“Satan, I give thee over my flock (garden, or field) to keep till —— (such and such a term), that thou mayst defend and protect it for me, and be my servant till this time has expired.”

He must, however, be careful to keep within the circle traced until the devil, who may very likely have chosen to appear in the shape of a goat, crow, toad, or serpent, has completely disappeared, otherwise the unfortunate man is irretrievably lost. He is equally sure to lose his soul if he die before the time of the contract has elapsed.

As long as the contract lasts, the peasant may

be sure of the devil's services, who for the time being will put a particular spirit—*spiridusui*—at his disposal. This spirit will serve him faithfully in every contingency; but in return he expects to be given the first mouthful of every dish partaken of by his master.<sup>1</sup>

Apothecaries in the towns say that they are often applied to for an unknown magic potion called *spiridusch* (that is, I suppose, a potion compelling the services of the demon *spiridusui*), said to have the property of disclosing hidden treasures to its lucky possessor. While I was at Hermanstadt, an apothecary there received the following letter, published in a local paper, and which I here give as literally as possible:—

“WORTHY SIR,—I wish to ask you of something I have been told by others—that is, that you have got for sale a thing they call *spiridusch*, but which, to speak more plainly, is the devil himself; and if this be true, I beg you to tell me if it be really true, and how much it costs, for my poverty is so great that I must ask the devil himself to help me. Those who told me were weak silly fellows, and were afraid; but I have no fear, and

<sup>1</sup> The ancients used likewise to cook for their household demons (*cœna demonum*)—Plaut. Pseudol. Also the Hindoos prepared food for the house-spirit.

have seen many things in my life,—therefore I pray you to write me this, and to take the greeting of an unknown and unhappy man. N. N.”

Besides the tale of the Arghisch monastery which I have quoted in a former chapter, there are many other Roumanian legends which tell us how every new church, or otherwise important building, became a human grave, as it was thought indispensable to its stability to wall in a living man or woman, whose spirit henceforth haunted the place. In later times, people having become less cruel, or more probably because murder is now attended with greater inconvenience to those concerned, this custom underwent some modifications, and it became usual, in place of a living man, to wall in his shadow. This is done by measuring the shadow of a person with a long piece of cord, or a tape made of strips of reed fastened together, and interring this measure instead of the person himself, who, unconscious victim of the spell thus cast upon him, will pine away and die within forty days. It is, however, an indispensable condition to the success of this proceeding that the chosen victim be ignorant of the part he is playing, wherefore careless passers-by near a building in process of erection may chance to hear the warning cry, “Beware lest they take thy shadow!” So deeply in-

grained is this superstition, that not long ago there were still professional shadow-traders, who made it their business to provide architects with the victims necessary for securing their walls. "Of course the man whose shadow is thus interred must die," argues the Roumanian, "but being unaware of his doom, he feels neither pain nor anxiety, so it is less cruel than to wall in a living man."

Similar to the legend of the Arghisch monastery, is that told of the fortress of Deva in Transylvania, which twelve architects had undertaken to build for the price of half a quarter of silver and half a quarter of gold. They set to work, but what they built each morning fell in before sunset, and what they built overnight was in ruins by next morning. Then they held counsel as to what was to be done in order to give strength to the building; and so it was resolved to seize the first of their wives who should come to visit her husband, and, burning her alive, mix up her ashes with the mortar to be used in building.

Soon after this, the wife of Kelemen the architect, resolving to visit her husband, ordered the carriage to be got ready. On the way she is overtaken by a heavy thunderstorm, and the coachman, an old family servant, warns her against proceeding, for he has had an ominous dream regarding her. She, however, persists in her resolve, and soon comes in



sight of the building. Her husband, on seeing her, prays to God that the carriage might break down or the horses fall lame, in order to hinder her arrival; but all is in vain, and the carriage soon reaches its destination. The sorrowing husband now reveals to his wife the terrible fate in store for her, to which she resigns herself, only begging leave to say farewell to her little son and her friends. This favour is granted, and returning the following day, she is burnt.

Her ashes mixed with the mortar give solidity to the walls; the building is completed, and the architects obtain the high price for which they had contracted.

Meanwhile the unhappy widower, returning home, is questioned by his little son as to where his mother stays so long? At first the father is evasive, but subsequently confesses the truth, on learning which the child falls dead of a broken heart.

Also at Hermanstadt we are shown a point in the old town-wall where a live student, dressed in *Ampel* and *Toga*, the costume of those days, was walled in, in order to "make fast" the fortified wall.

If we compare these legends with the traditions of other countries, we find many instances of a like belief: so at Arta, in Albania, where, according to Grimm, a thousand masons laboured in vain at a

bridge, whose walls invariably crumbled away overnight. There was heard the voice of an archangel saying: "If ye do not wall in a living person the bridge will never stand; neither an orphan nor yet a stranger shall it be, but the own wife of the master builder." The master loves his wife, but yet stronger is his ambition to see his name made famous by the bridge; so when his wife comes to the spot, he pretends to have dropped a ring in the foundations, and asks her to seek for it, in doing which she is seized upon and walled up. In dying she speaks a curse upon the bridge, that it may ever tremble like the head of a flower on its stalk.

In Serbia there is a similar legend of the fortress Skoda; and at Magdeburg, in Germany, the same is told of Margaretha, bondwoman of the Empress Editha, wife of the Emperor Otto, who voluntarily gave up her illegitimate child to be walled up in the gateway of the newly fortified town. Fifty years later, devoured by remorse, Margaretha appears before the judges to confess her crime, and crave Christian burial for the bones of her child. The wall being now opened at the place she indicates, there steps forth a small wizened figure with long tangled grey beard and shrunken limbs—no other than the child who, walled up here for half a century, had been miraculously

kept alive by the birds of the air bringing him food through an opening in his narrow prison.

Sometimes, indeed, the Roumanian seeks covertly to compass the death of a fellow-creature without the excuse of public benefit, and merely from motives of personal revenge. In such cases it is recommended to send gifts of unleavened bread to nine different churches, to be used simultaneously on the same Sunday at mass. This will ensure the death of the victim.

To the hand of a man who has committed murder from revenge, is ascribed the virtue of healing pains in the side.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

SAXON SUPERSTITION : REMEDIES—WITCHES—  
WEATHER-MAKERS.

THE superstitions afloat among Saxon peasants are of less poetical character than those *en vogue* with the Roumanians : there is more of the quack and less of the romantic element here to be found, and the invisible spiritual world plays less part in their beliefs, which oftenest relate to household matters, such as the wellbeing of cattle and poultry, the cure of diseases, and the success of harvest and vintage.

Innumerable are the recipes for curing the ague, or *frir* as it is termed in Saxon dialect : so for instance—

1. To cover up the patient during his shivering-fit with nine articles of clothing, each of a different colour and material.
2. To go into an inn or public-house, and after having drunk a glass of wine, go out again without

breaking silence or paying, but leaving behind some article of clothing which is of greater value than the wine taken.

3. Drinking in turn out of nine different wells.

4. To go into the garden when no one is looking, shake a young tree, and return to the house without glancing back: the fever will then have passed into the tree.

5. Any article of clothing purposely dropped on the ground will convey the fever to whoever finds it. This method is, however, to be distrusted, we are told by village authorities, for the finder may avert the spell by thrice spitting on the article in question. According to Saxon notions, you can apparently never go wrong in spitting on each and every occasion, this being a prime recipe for averting evil of all sorts. "When in doubt, play trumps," we are told in the rules for whist; and in the same way the Saxon would seem to say, "When in doubt, spit."

6. A spoonful of mortar taken from three different corner houses in the village, and, dissolved in vinegar, given to the patient to drink before the paroxysm.

7. If it be a child that is suffering from the fever, it may be rolled at sunrise over the grave-mounds in the churchyard, particular formulas being murmured the while.

8. The first three corn-ears seen in spring will, if gathered and eaten, keep off the ague during that whole year.

9. Take a kreutzer (farthing), an egg, and a handful of salt, and with these walk backwards to the nearest crossway, without looking back or breaking silence, and laying them down at the place where the roads join speak the following words: "When these three things return to me, then may likewise the fever come back."

10. Or else go to a stream or river, and throw something into it over the shoulder without looking back.

The intermittent fever recurring on every third day is here called the *Schweins-fieber* (swine-fever), and for recovery it is recommended to eat with the pigs out of their trough, and to lie down on the threshold of the pigsty, where the swine may walk over the prostrate body.

To shake off drowsiness, it is advised to swallow some drops of the water which falls back from the horses' mouths when they drink at the trough.

A person afflicted with warts can take as many dried peas as there are warts, and, standing before the fire, count backwards thus: "Five, four, three, two, one, none," and with the last word throw all the peas on to the glowing embers, running away quickly, so as not to hear the crackling sound of

the bursting peas, which would counteract the spell.

Another method is to lay a piece of bacon on the top of a hedge or paling, saying these words :—

“This meat I give to the crow,  
That away the warts may go.”

Rheumatism is cured by wearing a little bag filled with garlic and incense, or putting a knife under the pillow; and water taken from the spot where two ditches cross is good for sore eyes.

An approved love-charm is to take the two hind legs of a green tree-frog, bury these in an ant-hill till all the flesh is removed, then securely tie up the bones in a linen cloth. Whoever then touches this cloth will be at once seized with love for its owner.

Still more infallible is it to procure a piece of stocking or shoe-lace of the person you desire to captivate, boil it in water, and wear this token night and day against your heart. This recipe has passed into a proverb, for it is here said of any man known to be desperately in love, that “she must have secretly boiled his stockings.”

It is usually considered lucky to dream of pigs, except in some villages, where there is a prevalent belief that such a dream is prognostic of a death in the family.

To avert any illnesses which may occur to the

pigs, it is still customary in some places for the swineherd to dispense with his clothes the first time he drives out his pigs to pasture in spring. A newly elected Saxon pastor, regarding this practice as immoral, tried to prohibit it in his parish, but was sternly asked by the village Hann whether he were prepared to pay for all the pigs which would assuredly die that year in consequence of the omission?

The same absence of costume is recommended to women assisting a cow to calve for the first time.

When the cows are first driven to pasture in spring, they should be made to step over a plough-share placed across the threshold of the byre. Three new-laid eggs, deposited each at the junction of a different cross-road, will likewise bring luck to the herd.

If a swallow flies under a cow feeding in the meadow, it is believed that the milk will turn bloody. In some villages the skin of a weasel is kept in every byre, with which to rub the udder when the milk is bloody.

The ancient belief that certain old village matrons have the power surreptitiously to purloin their neighbours' milk, is prevalent throughout Transylvania, as I have had occasion over and over again to learn. "They mostly do it out of revenge," I was informed by a village oracle, to whom I owe



much information on this and other subjects, "and are apt to molest those houses whose children have mocked at or played tricks upon them; but just leave them alone, and they are not likely to do you any harm."

In former days, however, people in Transylvania were by no means inclined to "leave alone" those suspected of such occult proficiency, and witch-burning was a thing of quite everyday occurrence. In the neighbourhood of Reps alone, in the seventeenth century, the number of unfortunates who thus perished in the flames was upwards of twenty-five; and in 1697, Michael Hirling, member of the Schäsburg Council, has with significant brevity noted down in his diary, under such and such a date, "Went to Keisd; burnt a witch,"—just as a sportsman of to-day might note down in his game-book that he shot a hare or a pheasant.

The widow of the Saxon Comes and Royal Judge Valentin Seraphim had a similar fate in 1659 at Hermanstadt, and there is mention of another witch destroyed in 1669 in the same town. The very last witch-burning in Transylvania took place at Maros-Varshahely in 1752.

The following is an extract from the account of a witch's trial at Mühlbach last century:—

"A woman had engaged two labourers by the day to assist her in working in the vineyard.

After the mid-day meal all three lay down to rest a little, as is customary. An hour later the workmen got up and wanted to wake the woman, who lay there immovable on her back, with open mouth; but their efforts to rouse her were all in vain, for she neither seemed to feel them when they shook her, nor to hear them shouting in her ear. So the men let her lie, and went about their work. Coming back to the spot about sunset, they found the woman still lying as they had left her, like a corpse. And as they gazed at her wonderingly, a big fly came buzzing past, which one of the men caught and shut up in his leathern pouch. Then they renewed their attempts to awake the woman, but with no better success than before. After about an hour, they released the fly, which straight-way flew into the mouth of the sleeping woman, who immediately woke up and opened her eyes. On seeing this, the two workmen had no further doubt that she was a witch."

Also, in the year 1734, an Austrian officer who had been in Transylvania related the following story as authentic. Once when the roll was called on Sunday morning a soldier was missing. The corporal being sent to fetch him, the soldier called down from the window of the house where he was billeted, "I cannot go to church, for I have only one boot." Hereupon the corporal went up-stairs,

and the soldier explained how, seeking for something wherewith to grease his boots, in the absence of the Saxon housewife, he had found some ointment in an old broken pot concealed in a corner ; but scarcely had he rubbed the first boot with it, when the boot flew out of his hand and straight up the chimney. In the corporal's presence the soldier now proceeded to grease the second boot, which disappeared in the same way as the first.

The corporal reported these circumstances to his officer, "who had no difficulty in discerning the Saxon housewife to be a dangerous and malignant witch, of whom there are but too many in the land."

The woman, called to account, consented to pay for new boots for the soldier, but warned the officer against prosecuting her, "else he should repent it."

Another class of sorcerers, the *Wettermacher* (weather-makers), are those who have power to conjure up thunder and hail storms at will or to disperse them.

My old village oracle told me many stories about a man she had known, who used to go about the country with a small black bag in which was a book, a little stick, and a bunch of herbs. Whenever a storm was brewing, he was to be seen standing on some rising piece of ground, and

repeating his formulas against the gathering clouds. "People used to abuse him," she said, "and to say that he was in league with the devil; but I never saw him do any harm, and now that he is dead, there are many who regret him, for since then we have had heavier hailstorms than ever were known in his time."<sup>1</sup>

We are also told that many years ago, in the village of Wermesch, there lived a peasant who, whenever a thunderstorm was seen approaching, used to take his stand in front of it armed with an axe, by which means he always turned the storm aside. One day, when an unusually heavy storm was seen approaching, the weather-maker, as usual, placed himself in front of it, and hurled the axe up into the clouds. The storm passed by, but the axe did not fall down to the earth again. Many years later, the same peasant, taking a journey farther into the land, entered the hut of a Wallachian, and there to his astonishment found the axe he had thrown into the thunder-clouds several years previously. This Wallachian was a still

<sup>1</sup> Instances of weather-makers are also common in Germany. So, we are told, used to live in Suabia long ago a pastor renowned for his proficiency in exorcising the weather, and whenever a thunderstorm came on, he would stand at the open window invoking the clouds till they had all dispersed. But the work was heavy and difficult to do, and the pastor used frequently to be so exhausted after dispersing a storm that large drops of perspiration would trickle down his face.

greater sorcerer in weather-making than the *Wermesch* peasant, and had therefore succeeded in getting the axe down again from the sky.

There are many old formulas and incantations bearing on this subject to be found in ancient chronicles, of which the following one bears a date of the sixteenth century :—

#### FORMULA.

And the Lord went forth down a long and ancient road, and there was met by an exceeding large black cloud ; and the Lord spoke thus to it, “Where goest thou, thou large black cloud ? Where dost thou go ?” Then spoke the cloud, “I am sent to do an injury to the poor man—to wash away the roots of his corn and to throw down the corn-ears ; also to wash away the roots of his vines, and to overthrow the grapes.” But the Lord spoke, “Turn back, turn back, thou big black cloud, and do not wander forth to do an injury to the poor man, but go to the wild forest and wash away the roots of the big oak-tree and overthrow its leaves. St Peter, do thou draw thy sharp sword and cut in twain the big black cloud, that it may not go forth to do an injury to the poor men.”

Underneath this incantation the writer has put the following memorandum, “*Probatum an sit me latet probet quicunque vult.*”

In many houses it is still customary to burn juniper berries during a thunderstorm, or to stick a knife in the ground before the house. Like the Roumanian, the Saxon also considers it unsafe to point at an approaching thunderstorm; but this is a belief shared by many people, I understand.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

SAXON SUPERSTITION CONTINUED : ANIMALS—  
PLANTS—DAYS.

THE cat, dedicated to Frouma, Frezja, or Holda, in old German times, still plays a considerable part in Saxon superstition. Thus to render fruitful a tree which refuses to bear, it will suffice to bury a cat amongst its roots.<sup>1</sup> Epileptic people may be cured by cutting off the ears of a cat and anointing them with the blood; and an eruption at the mouth is healed by passing the cat's tail between the lips.

When the cat washes its face, visitors may be expected; and as long as the cat is healthy and in good looks, the cattle will likewise prosper.

A runaway cat, when recovered, must be swung

<sup>1</sup> An old German saying, "Hier liegt der Hund begraben"—and which is equivalent to saying, That now we penetrate the true meaning of something not previously understood—has been explained in the same way in Büchner's 'Geflügelte Worte': There the dog lies buried—that is why the tree bears fruit.

three times round the hearth, to attach it to the dwelling; and the same is done to a stolen cat by the thief who would retain it. In entering a new house, it is recommended to throw in a cat (sometimes also a dog) before any member of the family step over the threshold, else one of them will die.

The dog is of less importance than the cat, except for its power of giving warning of approaching death by unnatural howling.

Here are some other Saxon superstitions of mixed character :—

1. Who can blow back the flame into a candle will become pastor.

2. New servants must be suffered to eat freely the first day they enter service, else their hunger will never be stilled.

3. Who visits a neighbour's house must sit down, even were it but for a moment, or he will deprive the inhabitants of their sleep. (Why, then, do Saxon peasants never offer one a chair? or is a stranger too insignificant to have the power of destroying sleep?)

4. It is dangerous to stare down long into a well, for the well-dame who dwells at the bottom of each is easily offended. But children are often curious, and, hoping to get a look at her face, they bend over the edge, calling out mockingly, "Brannefrà, Brannefrà, zieh mich än de Brännen" (Dame of



the well, pull me down into the well); but quickly they draw back their heads, afraid of their own audacity, lest their wish be in truth realised.

5. It is not good to count the beehives, or the loaves when they are put in the oven.

6. Neither is it good to whitewash the house when the moon is decreasing, for that produces bugs.

7. Who eats mouldy bread will live long.

8. Licking the platter clean at table brings fine weather.

9. On the occasion of each merrymaking, such as weddings, christenings, &c., some piece of glass or crockery must be broken to avert misfortune.<sup>1</sup>

10. Salt thrown on the back of a departing guest will prevent him from carrying away the luck of the house. Neither salt nor garlic should ever be given away, as with them the luck goes.

11. A broom put upside down behind the door will keep off the witches.

12. It is bad luck to lay a loaf on the table upside down.

13. When foxes and wolves meet in the market-place, their prices will rise (of course, as these animals could only be thus bold during the severest cold, when prices of eggs, butter, &c., are at their highest).

<sup>1</sup> The Greeks also observed this at their banquets, in order to appease the gods.

14. A piece of bread found lying in the field or road should never be eaten by the finder; nor should he untie a knotted-up cloth or a rag he chances to discover, for the knot perhaps contains an illness.

15. Whoever has been robbed of anything and wishes to discover the thief, must select a black hen, and for nine consecutive Fridays must, together with this hen, abstain from all food. The thief will then either die or bring back the stolen goods. This is called taking up the black fast against a person.

On this last subject an anecdote is told of a peasant of the village of Petersdorf, who returned one day from the town of Bistritz bearing 200 florins, which he had received as the price for a team of oxen. Reaching home in a somewhat inebriated state, he wished to sleep off his tipsiness, and laid himself down behind the stove, but took the precaution of first hiding the money in a hole in the kitchen wall. Next morning, on waking up, the peasant searched for his money, but was unable to find it, having completely forgotten where he had put it in his intoxication; so, in the firm belief that some one had stolen the 200 florins, he went to consult an old Wallachian versed in magic, and begged him to take up the black fast against the man who had abstracted the money. Before long people began to notice how the peasant himself

grew daily weaker and seemed to pine away. At last, by some chance, he hit upon the place where the money was hidden, and joyfully hurried to the Wallachian to counter-order the black fast. But it was now too late, for the charm had already worked, and before long the man was dead.

There is also a whole set of rhymes and formulas for exorcising thieves, and forcing them to return whatever they have taken ; but these would be too lengthy to record here.

Of the plants which play a part in Saxon superstition, first and foremost is the fulsome garlic—not only employed against witches, but likewise regarded as a remedy in manifold illnesses and as an antidote against poison. Garlic put into the money-bag will prevent the witches from getting at it, and in the stables will keep the milk from being abstracted, while rubbed over the body it will defend a person against the pest.

To the lime-tree are also attached magic qualities, and in some villages it is usual to plant a lime-tree before the house to keep witches from entering.

Much prized is the lilac bush. Its blossoms, made into tea, are good for the fever ; and the bush itself is often reverently saluted with bent knee and uncovered head. Many of the formulas against sickness are directed to be recited while walking thrice round a bush of lilac.

The first strawberry blossom, if swallowed by whoever finds it, will keep him free from sickness during that year.

The four-leaved shamrock here, as elsewhere, is considered to confer particular luck on the finder, but only when he carries it home without having to cross over water of any sort. Laid in the prayer-book, a four-leaved shamrock will enable its possessor to distinguish witches in church.

The common house-leek, here called *Donnerkraut* (thunder-herb), will protect from lightning the roof on which it grows.

Animals beaten with a switch of privet or dogwood will die or fall sick.

Larkspur hung over the stable door will keep witches from entering.

The *Atropa belladonna* (called here *Buchert*) renders mad whoever tastes of it, and in his madness he will be compelled blindly to obey the will of whoever has given him of this herb to eat; therefore it is here said of a man who behaves insanely that "he must have eaten Buchert."

Whoever kills an adder under a white hazel bush, plants a pea in the head of this adder, and then buries it in the earth so that the pea can strike root, has only to gather the first flower which grows from the pea and wear it in his cap, in order henceforward to have power over all witches

in the neighbourhood. But let him beware of the witches, who, knowing this, are ever on the look-out to catch him without the pea-flower and to do him an injury.

A particular growth of vine-leaf, whose exact definition I have not succeeded in rightly ascertaining, is eagerly sought for by Saxon girls in some villages. Whoever finds it sticks it in her hair, and thus decorated, she has the right to kiss the first man she meets on her homeward way. This will ensure her speedy marriage. A story is related of a girl who, meeting a nobleman driving in a handsome four-in-hand carriage, stopped the horses, and begged leave to kiss him, to the gentleman's no small astonishment. He resigned himself, however, with a good grace when he had grasped the situation, and gave the kiss as well as a golden piece to the fair suppliant. The proper romantic *dénouement* of this episode would have been for the gentleman to lead home as bride the maiden thus cast in his path by fate, but we are not told that he pushed his complaisance quite so far.

A whole volume might be written on the subject of agrarian superstition, of which let a few examples here suffice.

In many villages it is customary for the ploughman going to work for the first time that year in

the field, to drive his plough over a broomstick laid on the threshold of the courtyard.

The first person who sows each year will have meagre crops. During the whole sowing-time no one should give a kindling out of the house. It is never allowable to sow in Holy Week.

To ensure the wheat against being eaten by birds, the sowing should be done before sunrise in silence, and without looking over the shoulder. Also earth taken from the churchyard will keep birds off the field.

Whoever lies down to sleep in a new-ploughed furrow will fall ill; nor must the women be allowed to sew or spin in the cornfield, for that would occasion thunderstorms, while washing the hands in the field will cause the house to burn.

In obstinate droughts it is customary in some places for several girls led by an old woman, and all of them absolutely naked, to repair at midnight to the courtyard of some neighbouring peasant, whose harrow they must steal, and with it proceed across the field to the nearest stream, where the harrow is put afloat with a burning light on each corner.

The harvest will be bad if the cuckoo comes into the village and cries there.

In bringing in the corn, a few heads of garlic

bound up in the first sheaf will keep off witches.

The most important days in Saxon superstition are Sunday, Tuesday, and Friday.

Whoever wears a shirt sewed by his mother on a Sunday will die. According to another version, however, a shirt which has been spun, woven, and sewed entirely on Sundays is a powerful talisman, which will render all enemies powerless against the wearer, and bring him safely through every battle.

Wood cut on a Sunday serves to heat the fire of hell. Sunday children are lucky, and can discover hidden treasures.

In some districts no cow or swine herd would lead his animals to pasture on any other day but a Tuesday.<sup>1</sup>

Thursday is in many places the luckiest day for marriages, also for markets.

On Friday the weather is apt to change. It is a good day for sowing and for making vinegar, but a bad one for baking, or for starting on a journey. In some places it is considered unsafe to comb the hair on a Friday—therefore the village school on that day presents a somewhat rough and unkempt appearance.

<sup>1</sup> In the Harz and Westphalia, Tuesday is considered the luckiest day for entering on a new service.

Rain upon Good Friday is a favourable omen.

On Easter Monday the lads run about the towns and villages sprinkling with water all the girls and women they meet. This is supposed to ensure the flax growing well. On the following day the girls return the attention by watering the boys.<sup>1</sup>

On Easter Monday the cruel sport of cock-shooting is still kept up in many Saxon villages. The cock is tied to a post and shot at till it dies a horrible lingering death. Sometimes the sport is diversified by blindfolding the actors, who strike at their victim with wooden clubs.

Between Easter and Pentecost no one should either marry or change their domicile.

On Pentecost Monday it is sometimes customary to elect three of the girls as queens, who, dressed up in their finest clothes, preside at church and at the afternoon dance.

In one village it is usual on Pentecost Sunday at mid-day, when the bells are ringing, to encircle

<sup>1</sup> This custom, which appears to be a very old one, is also prevalent among various Slav peoples, Poles, Serbs, &c. In Poland it used to be *de rigueur* that the water be poured over a girl who was still asleep; so in each house a victim, usually a servant-maid, was selected, who had to feign sleep, and patiently receive the cold shower-bath, which was to ensure the luck of the family during that year. The custom has now become modified to suit a more delicate age, and instead of formidable horse-buckets of water, dainty little perfume-squirts have come to be used in many places.



each fruit-tree with a rope made of twisted straw.

The fires on St John's day, and the belief that hidden treasures are to be found, are also prevalent among the Saxons.

No one should bathe or wade into a river on the 29th June, Feast of SS. Peter and Paul, for fear of drowning, it being supposed that this day requires the sacrifice of a human victim.

Before the 24th of August no corn should be garnered, because only after that date do the thunderstorms cease, or as the people say, "the thunderclouds go home."

The night of St Thomas (21st December), popularly considered to be the longest night in the year, is the date consecrated by Saxon superstition to the celebration of the games which elsewhere are usual on All-Halloween. Every girl puts her fate to the test on that evening, and there are various ways of so doing, with onions, flowers, shoes, &c.

One way of interrogating fate is with a sharp knife to cut an apple in two. If in doing so no seed has been split, then the wish of your heart will be fulfilled.

Similar games are also practised on Sylvester night (31st December), which night is also otherwise prophetic of what is to happen during

the coming year. If it be clear, then the fowls will lay many eggs that year, and bright moonlight means full garneries. A red dawn on New Year's day means war, and wind is significant of the pest or cholera.

## CHAPTER XXX.

## SAXON CUSTOMS AND DRAMAS.

SOME of the Saxon customs are peculiarly interesting, as being obviously remnants of paganism, and offer curious proof of the force of verbal tradition, which in this case has not only borne transmigration from a distant country, but likewise weathered the storm of two successive changes of religion.

It speaks strongly for the tenacity of pagan habits and trains of thought, that although at the time these Saxon colonists appeared in Transylvania they had already belonged to the Christian Church for over three hundred years, yet many points of the landscape in their new country received from them pagan appellations. Thus we find the *Götzenberg* or mountain of the gods,<sup>1</sup> which rises above the village of Heltau; and the *Wodesch* and *Wolenk* applied to woods and plains, both evidently derived from Woden.

<sup>1</sup> The word *Götzen* in German is exclusively used to express pagan gods.

Another remnant of paganism is the *Feurix* or *Feuriswolf*, which yet lingers in the minds of these people. According to ancient German mythology, the *Feuriswolf* is a monster which on the last day is to open his mouth so wide that the upper jaw will touch the sky and the lower one the earth; and not long ago a Saxon woman bitterly complained in a court of justice that her husband had cursed her over-strongly in saying, “Der Wärlthangd saul dich frieszen!”—literally, “May the world-dog swallow thee!”

Many old pagan ceremonies are likewise still clearly to be distinguished through the flimsy shrouding of a later period—their origin piercing unmistakably through the surface-varnish of Christianity, thought necessary to adapt them to newer circumstances, and, like a clumsily remodelled garment, the original cut asserting itself despite the fashionable trimmings now adorning it. Thus, for instance, in many popular rhymes and dialogues it has been clearly proved that those parts now assigned to the Saviour and St Peter originally belonged to the old gods Thor and Loki, while the faithless apostle Judas has had thrust upon him the personification of a whole hoard of German demons. As to St Elias, who in some parts of Hungary, as well as in Roumania, Servia, and Croatia, is supposed to have the working of

the thunderbolts, there can be little doubt that he is verily no other than the old thunder-god Thor under a Christian mask.

One of the most striking of the afore-mentioned Christianised dramas is the *Tod-Austragen*, or throwing out the Death,—a custom still extant in several Transylvanian villages, and which may likewise still be found existing in some remote parts of Germany.

The Feast of the Ascension is the day on which this ceremony takes place in a village near Hermanstadt, and it is conducted in the following manner:—

After forenoon church on that day, all the school-girls repair to the house of one of their companions, and there proceed to dress up the "Death." This is done by tying up a threshed-out corn-sheaf into the rough semblance of a head and body, while the arms are simulated by a broomstick stuck horizontally. This being done, the figure is dressed in the Sunday clothes of a young village matron, and the head adorned with the customary cap and veil, fastened by silver pins. Two large black beads or black-headed pins represent the eyes; and thus equipped, the figure is displayed at the open window, in order that all people may see it on their way to afternoon church. The conclusion of the vespers is the signal for the girls to seize on the

figure and open the procession round the village. Two of the eldest schoolgirls hold the "Death" between them; the others follow in regular order two and two, singing a Church hymn. The boys are excluded from the procession, and must content themselves with admiring the "*Schöner Tod*" (beautiful Death) from a distance. When the whole village has been traversed in this manner from end to end, the girls repair to another house, whose door is locked against the besieging troop of boys. The figure of Death is here stripped of its gaudy attire, and the naked straw bundle thrown out of the window, whereupon it is seized by the boys and carried off in triumph, to be thrown into the nearest stream or river.

This is the first part of the drama; while the second consists in one of the girls being solemnly invested with the clothes and ornaments previously worn by the figure, and, like it, being led in procession round the village to the singing of the same hymns as before. The ceremony terminates by a feast at the house of the parents whose daughter has acted the principal part, and from which, as before, the boys are excluded.

According to popular belief, it is allowed to eat fruit only after this day, as now the "Death"—that is, the unwholesomeness—has been expelled from

them. Also the river in which the Death has been drowned may now be considered fit for public bathing.

If this ceremony be ever neglected in the village where it is customary, such neglect is supposed to entail death to one of the young people, or loss of virtue to a girl.

This same custom may, as I have said, be found still lingering in various other parts, everywhere with slight variations. Thus there are places where the figure is burnt instead of drowned; and Passion Sunday (often called the dead Sunday), or else the 25th of March, is the day sometimes fixed for its accomplishment.

In some places it was usual for the figure to be attired in the shirt of the last person who had died, and with the veil of the most recent bride on its head. Also the figure is occasionally pelted with stones by the youths of both sexes—those who succeed in hitting it being secured against death for the coming year.

At Nuremberg little girls dressed in white used to go in procession through the town, carrying a small open coffin in which a doll was laid out in state, or sometimes only a stick dressed up, and with an apple to represent the head.

In most of these places the rhymes sung apply

to the departure of winter and the advent of summer, such as the following:—

“And now we have chased the Death away,  
And brought in the summer so warm and gay—  
The summer and the month of May.  
We bring sweet flowers full many a one,  
We bring the rays of the golden sun,  
For the dreary Death at last is gone.”

Or else:—

“Come all of you and do not tarry,  
The evil Death away to carry;  
Come spring once more, with us to dwell—  
Welcome, O spring, in wood and dell!”

And there is no doubt that similar rhymes used also to be sung in Transylvania, until they were replaced by Lutheran hymns after the Reformation.

Some German archæologists have attempted to prove the Death in these games to be of more recent introduction, and to have replaced the winter of former times, so as to give the ceremony a more Christian colouring by the allusion to the triumph of Christ over death on His resurrection and ascension into heaven. Without presuming to contradict the many well-known authorities who have taken this view of the question, I cannot help thinking that it hardly requires such explanation to account for the presence of Death in these dramas. Nowadays, when civilisation and luxury have done so much towards equalising all seasons,



so that we can never be deprived of flowers in winter nor want for ice in summer, it is difficult to realise the enormous gulf which in olden times separated winter from summer. In winter not only were all means of communication cut off for a large proportion of people, but their very existence was, so to say, frozen up; and when the garneries were scantily filled, or the inclement season prolonged by some weeks, death was literally standing at the door of millions of poor wretches. No wonder, then, that winter and death became identical in their minds, and that they hailed the advent of spring with delirious joy, dancing round the first violet, and following about the first cockchafer in solemn procession. It was the feast of Nature which they celebrated then as now—Nature mighty and eternal, always essentially the same, whether decked out in pagan or in Christian garb!

Another drama of somewhat more precise form is the *Königslied* or *Todtentanz* (King's Song or Dance of Death), a rhymed dialogue still often represented in Saxon villages all over Transylvania.

Dramatic representations of the Dance of Death were first introduced into Germany before the fifteenth century by the Dominican order, but do not seem there to have taken any very firm root, since we hear no more mention of such perform-

ance existing after the middle of the fifteenth century. It is therefore probable that this drama was transmitted, as long as 500 years ago at least, to the Transylvanian Saxons, who thus have retained it intact long after it had elsewhere fallen into disuse.

The personages consist of an Angel, robed in white, and with a golden wand; the King, attired in purple or scarlet cloak, crown and sceptre, and followed by a train of courtiers; then Death, who is sometimes clothed in black, sometimes in a white sheet, and who either bears a scythe or a bow and arrows in his hand. On either side of him, by way of adjutants, stand two mute personages, a doctor and an apothecary,—the first with powdered head, hanging plait, tricorne hat, and snuffbox in his hand; the latter bearing a basket containing medicine phials. The whole is sung, and the Angel opens the performance with these lines:—

*Angel.* Good people all, come list to me,—  
New tidings to you will I sing;  
'Tis of a mighty King  
Who on the open market-place  
With Death met face to face.

*Death.* All hail, thou rich and mighty King!  
Great news to thee this day I bring;  
Thy death-hour it has struck,  
'Tis time for thee to join my band,—  
I wander thus from land to land.

*King.* Thou haughty man, who mayest be,  
That I should have to follow thee?

What is thy land, thy name ?  
Art thou a lord ? thy rank proclaim,  
Else shaltst be put to shame.

*Death.* 'Twere well for thee my name to know ;  
Thy pride soon will I overthrow.  
The people here they call me Death ;  
Of young or old I take no heed,  
Alike they wither at my breath.

*King.* Of Death I oft have heard, indeed,  
But cannot of thee now take heed.  
Quick from my land begone !  
Or shaltst be fettered foot and hand,  
And in a dungeon thrown.

*Angel.* Then Death he shot a deadly dart,  
And pierced the King unto the heart.

*Death.* O foolish mortal, proud and blind !  
See now, where is thy vaunted power  
In iron fetters Death to bind ?

*Angel.* The King he turneth deadly pale,  
And feels his strength about to fail.

*King.* Lord, mercifully my life prolong,  
Thus wofully not let me die ;  
Hast plenty poor to choose among.

*Death.* More than I list of poor I have ;  
But rich men also do I crave  
My ranks to ornament,  
As bishops, princes, mighty kings,—  
These fill me with content.

*King.* Great is thy power—

*Angel.* The King did say,  
Outstretched as on his bed he lay—

*King.* O Death, unto thy power I bow ;  
But still one hope I cherish yet,  
A favour last grant to me now.

*Death.* Then speak—

*Angel.* Said Death unto the King—

*Death.* Let's hear what is this mighty thing.

*King.* But twelve years longer let me live ;

Twelve thousand pounds of heaviest gold

In payment to thee will I give.

*Death.* For all thy gold I little care ;

Do thou at once for death prepare.

'Tis vain to pray, 'tis vain to grieve ;

Come in my ranks, for thou art mine,—

Thy gold behind to others leave.

*King.* But give to me—

*Angel.* The King did say—

*King.* But half a year and yet a day ;

I fain would build a castle new

Of massive stone, with lofty tower,

From which my kingdom I may view.

*Death.* Leave those to build who list to build ;

For thee, thy span of life is filled.

Come in my ranks and tarry not,

We must to-day a measure tread ;

'Twill cause thee small delight, I wot.

*King.* Yet will I yet for something pray :

This only wish do not gainsay,

If only thou wiltst let me live,

A beggar humble will I be ;

My royal crown to thee I give.

*Death.* O King, why useless words thus waste ?

Prepare to go, and make thee haste,

Nor seek me idly to detain ;

Still many thousand men must I

To-day invite to join my train.

*King.* Oh hurry not—

*Angel.* The King did say—

*King.* But grant me yet another day.

To make my will still let me bide ;  
My silver, gold, and jewels rare,  
I fain would righteously divide.

*Angel.* But Death then spoke.

*Death.* It cannot be ;  
Conform must thou to my decree.  
Prepare to start without reprieve ;  
Thy silver, gold, and jewels rare,  
Must be content behind to leave.

*King.* Then is it all in vain I pray ?

*Death.* Lament and prayer all useless be.

*King.* Shall I not see another day ?

*Death.* Not one. To judgment come with me.

*King.* Oh grant me but one little hour !

*Death.* To grant aught is not in my power.

*King.* Have patience but three words to hear.

*Death.* Patience's an herb<sup>1</sup> which grows not here.

*Angel.* The King upon his couch down sinks :  
His haughty form all helpless shrinks ;  
To ashy white has turned his lip.  
Both rich and poor the strangler thus  
With iron hand alike doth grip.  
Thus stealthy Death will oft appear  
When no one deems that he is near,  
With deadly aim to shoot his dart.  
So live in God, His laws observe,  
That mayst in peace depart.

[*The KING sinks down lifeless, and DEATH disappears. The soldiers raise up the dead body and lay it on a bier, singing—*

*Soldiers.* Why value crown or power,  
Since neither can we own  
But for a passing hour ?  
No sceptre and no throne  
Grim death away can scare,  
Nor gold nor jewels rare.

<sup>1</sup> In the original the phrase runs :—

“ This grows not in my garden.”

*Angel [reappearing].* By Providence as herald sent,  
Touched by the sound of dire lament;  
The monarch to his land restore  
Will I, in pity for your grief.  
King, for thy kingdom live once more.

*[The ANGEL touches the KING's breast, who, waking apparently from a deep slumber, sits up and sings—*

*King.* How is't I feel? and can it be  
That once again the earth I see?  
What miracle of grace!  
Who art Thou, Lord? I knew Thee not;  
Deign to reveal Thy face.

*Angel.* The Lord who sent me to this land,  
He is a Lord of mighty hand.  
He gives, He taketh life,  
As thou hast seen, O King, this day;  
To do His will must strive away.

*[The KING, now standing up, takes the crown from his head, and accompanied by the chorus, sings—*

*King.* Lord of the world, the crown is Thine,  
Who rulest us with power divine.  
Oh what is man! He is but dust,  
And fall a prey to death he must.  
Let none be proud of lofty rank,  
For 'tis indeed but idle prank.  
Guide Thou us, Lord, upon our way;  
Our souls receive in grace some day.

Grimm is of opinion that this drama is also allegorical of the triumph of spring over winter, which opinion he chiefly supports by the incident of the King's resurrection, and of the allusion to the garden. This view has, however, been strongly combated by other authorities, who remind us that

in many old pictures Death is often represented as a gardener, and armed with bow and arrows.

Herodes is the name of a Christmas drama acted by the Transylvanian Saxons; but as, though undoubtedly ancient, it is totally wanting in humour and originality, I do not here reproduce it. Most probably such qualities as this drama may once have possessed have been pruned away by the over-vigorous knife of some ruthless reformer.

The Song of the Three Kings, beginning—

“Through storm and wind, through weather wild,  
We come to seek the new-born child,”—

is sung by little boys, who at Christmas-time go about from house to house with tinsel crowns on their heads, one of them having his face blackened to represent the negro king, and who expect a few coins and some victuals as reward for their performance.

At Hermanstadt these three kings threatened to become somewhat of a nuisance in Christmas week, there being several sets of them who were continually walking uninvited into our rooms. At last one day when we had already received the visit of several such royal parties, our footman opened the door and inquired in a tone of mild exasperation, “Please, madam, the holy three kings are there again; had I not better kick them down-stairs?”

## CHAPTER XXXI.

## BURIED TREASURES.

FEW things possess such powerful attraction as the thought of buried treasures which may be lying unsuspected around us. To think that the golden buttercups which dot a meadow are, perchance, but the reflections of other golden pieces lying beneath the surface ; to suppose the crumbling grey walls of some ancient tower to be the dingy casket enshrouding priceless gems, there secreted by long-vanished hands,—is surely enough to set imagination on fire, and engender the wild delirious hope that to you alone, favoured among ten thousand other mortals who have passed by the spot unknowing, may be destined the triumph of finding that golden key.

Vain and futile as such researches mostly are, yet they have in Transylvania a somewhat greater semblance of reason than in most other countries, for nowhere else, perhaps, have so many successive



nations been forced to secrete their riches in flying from an enemy, to say nothing of the numerous, yet undiscovered, veins of gold and silver which must be seaming the country in all directions. Not a year passes without bringing to light some earthen jar containing old Dacien coins, or golden ornaments of Roman origin,—which discoveries all serve to feed and keep up the national superstitions connected with treasures and treasure-finders.

The night of St George, 24th April (corresponding to our 6th of May), is of all others the most favourable in the year for such researches, and many Roumanian peasants spend these hours in wandering about the hills, trying to probe the earth for the gold it contains, for in this night (so say the legends) all these treasures begin to burn, or, to speak in technical mystic language, “to bloom,” in the bosom of the earth, and the light they give forth, described as a bluish flame, resembling the colour of burning spirits of wine, serves to guide favoured mortals to their place of concealment.

The conditions to the successful raising of a treasure are manifold and difficult of accomplishment. In the first place, it is by no means easy for a common mortal who has not been born on a Sunday, nor even at mid-day when the bells are ringing, to hit upon a treasure at all. If he does,

however, chance to catch sight of a flame such as I have described, he must quickly pierce through the swaddling rags of his right foot with a knife, and then throw it in the direction of the flame seen. If two people are together during this discovery, they must on no account break silence till the treasure is raised; neither is it allowed to fill up the hole from which anything has been taken, for that would entail the death of one of the finders. Another important feature to be noted is that the lights seen before midnight on St George's day denote treasures kept by good spirits, while those which appear at a later hour are unquestionably of a pernicious nature.

For the comfort of less favoured mortals who do not happen to have been born either on a Sunday nor to the sound of bells, I must here mention that these deficiencies may to some extent be condoned for and the mental vision sharpened by the consumption of mouldy bread; so that whoever has, during the preceding year, been careful to feed upon decayed loaves only, may (if he survive this trying diet) become the fortunate discoverer of hidden treasures.

Sometimes the power of finding a particular treasure is supposed only to be possessed by members of some particular family. A curious instance of this was lately recorded in Roumania, relating to

an old ruined convent, where, according to a popular legend, a large sum of gold is concealed. A deputation of peasants, at considerable trouble and expense, found out the last surviving member of the family supposed to possess the mystic power, and offered him unconditionally a very handsome sum merely for the benefit of his personal attendance on the spot. The gentleman in question being old, and probably sceptical, declined the offer, to the peasants' great disappointment.

There is hardly a ruin, mountain, or forest in Transylvania which has not got some legend of a hidden treasure attached to it. These are often supposed to be guarded by some animal, as a serpent, turkey, dog, or pig; or sometimes the devil himself, in the shape of a black buffalo, haunts the place at night and carries off those who attempt to raise the treasure. Out of the many such tales there afloat, I shall only here quote a few which have been collected and written down from the words of old villagers in different places:—

#### THE TREASURE OF DARIUS

is one of the principal treasures supposed to be somewhere concealed on Transylvanian ground. It is said to be of immense value, and is believed to have been secreted when the Persian king was compelled to fly before the Scythian forces; but

opinions are divided as to the exact locality where it lies. One version, which places the treasure in a forest in the neighbourhood of Hamlesch, relates of it that fifty years ago a poor German workman, sleeping in the forest one night, discovered the treasure, and being versed in the formalities to be observed on such occasions, laid upon it some article of clothing marked with his name, in token of taking possession. Then, as he did not trust the country people, he went off to Germany to fetch his relations to assist him in raising the treasure. But, hardly arrived at his house, he fell ill and died, and though on his deathbed he exactly described the place where he had seen the gold, and gave directions for finding it, his relations were never able to hit upon the place.

Another story declares the treasure to have been hidden in the Sacsorer Burg, an old ruined fortress, where some centuries ago it was discovered by six Hungarian burghers, who swore to keep the secret amongst themselves; and once in each year they went and carried off a sack of gold and silver pieces, which they divided. Only after five of them had died did the last survivor in his testament leave directions how to reach the place. To approach the treasure (so runs the legend), one must pass through a strong iron door lying towards the west. This door can be opened from the outside,

but whoever is not in possession of the secret is sure to fall down through a trap-door into a terrible abyss, where he will be cut to pieces by a thousand swords set in motion by machinery: therefore it is necessary to bridge over the trap-door with several stout planks before entering. After this a second iron door is reached, in front of which are lying two life-sized lions of massive silver. This second door leads into a large hall, where round a long table are sitting the figures of King Darius, and of twelve other kings whom he had vanquished in battle. King Darius himself, who sits at the head of the table, is formed of purest gold, while the other monarchs, six on either side, are of silver. This hall leads into a cellar, where are ranged twenty-four barrels bound with hoops of silver: half of these barrels contain gold, the other half silver pieces.

It is likewise asserted that towards the end of last century a Wallachian hermit was known to reside in those same ruins, in whose possession were often seen gold and silver coins stamped with the image of King Darius, but that when questioned on the subject, he would never reveal how he had come by them.

Finally, it is said that within the memory of people still living, there came hither from Switzerland three men with an ancient parchment

document, out of which they professed to have deciphered the directions for finding the treasure of Darius; but after spending several days in digging about the place, they had to go empty-handed away.

After writing these lines I have unexpectedly come across a new version of the treasure of Darius, as I read in a current newspaper, dated November 24, 1886, that only a few weeks ago an old Roumanian peasant woman formally applied to the Government at Klausenburg for leave to dig for the treasure of Darius, which, as a sorcerer had revealed to her, lay buried at Hideg Szamos.

The directions she had received were to dig, at the spot indicated, as deep as the height of the Klausenburg church steeple, when stone steps and an iron door would be disclosed. The latter can be opened by a blow from an axe which had been dipped in holy water. A large stone vault with twelve more iron doors will then appear. Twelve golden keys hang on the wall, and each door being opened, will lead to a chamber filled to overflowing with solid gold-pieces. Three people only were permitted to dig simultaneously for the treasure, the sorcerer himself disinterestedly disclaiming any part in the matter, as he professes to have renounced all earthly goods.

The prosaic Klausenburg officials could not, however, be induced to share the woman's enthusiasm, and tried to convince her of the folly of such search; but all in vain, for, dispensing with the permission she had failed to obtain, she has now engaged three day-labourers, who since the 15th November 1886 are said to be engaged on this stupendous task.

Perhaps we shall some day hear the result of their labours.

#### THE TREASURE OF DECEBALUS

is also among those to which Transylvania lays claim. When Trajan went forth for the second time against the Dacian king, Decebalus, vanquished in the fight near his capital Zarmiszegethusa, retired to a stronghold in the mountains, where he was again pursued by the conqueror, and after a second defeat, perished by his own hand, in order to escape the ignominy of captivity. But before these reverses Decebalus had taken care to secure his immense riches. For this purpose he caused the river Sargetia,<sup>1</sup> which flowed past his residence, to be diverted from its course at great toil and expense; in the dry river-bed strong vaulted cellars were constructed, in which all the

<sup>1</sup> The present river Strell.

gold, silver, and precious stones were stowed away, the whole being then covered up with earth and gravel, and the river brought back to its original course.

The work had been executed by prisoners, who were all either massacred or deprived of their eyesight to avoid betrayal. But a confidant of the Dacian king, Bicilis or Biculus, who afterwards fell into Roman captivity, revealed to the emperor what he knew of it, and Trajan thus succeeded in appropriating a considerable portion of the secreted treasure, but not the whole, it is said.

In the year 1543 some Wallachian fishermen, when mooring their boat on the banks of the river Strell, became aware of something shining in the water at the place where a tree had lately been uprooted. Pursuing the search, they brought to light more than forty thousand gold-pieces, each of them as heavy as three ducats, and stamped with the image of King Decebalus on one side, and that of the goddess of victory on the other. This treasure was delivered up to the monk Martinuzzi, the counsellor of Queen Isabella, and the most powerful man in Transylvania of that time. Part of the money was sent to the Roman emperor, Ferdinand I.; but many people declare the treasure of Decebalus not to be exhausted even now, and prophesy that we have not yet heard the last of it.



## THE TREASURE ON THE KOND.

The Kond is a gloomy wooded plain near to the town of Regen. Great riches are said to be here concealed, but they are difficult to obtain, for the place is haunted by coal-black buffaloes, who may be seen running backwards and forwards at night, especially about the time of St George and St Thomas. A citizen named Simon Hill, who once caught sight of the subterraneous fire, marked the place, resolving to raise the treasure the following night. But distrusting his own strength and courage, he confided his purpose to a neighbour called Martin Rosenau, asking him to come to the place that night at twelve o'clock.

This neighbour, however, was faithless, being one of those who pray against the Catechism, so he resolved to cheat his friend. Instead therefore of waking his neighbour, as had been agreed, at ten o'clock, he repaired alone to the spot, where, digging, he found nothing but a horse's skull filled with dead frogs. Full of anger at his bad luck, he took the skull and flung it along with the frogs in at the open window of his sleeping friend. But what was the surprise of this latter when, waking in the morning, he found the whole room strewn with golden ducats, and in the midst the horse's skull, likewise half full of gold. Happy beyond measure,

Simon Hill ran to his neighbour to tell him the joyful news how God had sent him the gold in his sleep ; but the faithless Martin, on hearing the tale, was so seized with grief and anger that a stroke of apoplexy put an end to his life.

#### GOLD DUST.

An old man at Nadesch relates how in his youth he missed a chance of becoming a rich man for life. Going once to the forest, he saw on the steep bank near a stream the handle of some sort of earthenware jar peeping out of the soil. Curious to investigate it, he climbed up the steep bank, but hardly had he seized the handle and drawn the heavy jar out of the earth, when, the ground giving way under his feet, he rolled to the bottom of the incline still holding the jar in his hand. But finding that it contained nothing but a dull yellow dust, which had partly been spilt in falling, he threw it as worthless into the stream. Often in later days did he regret this rash act, for, as he was told by others, this yellow powder could have been nothing else but gold dust.

Other ancient vessels which have been sometimes discovered filled with ashes,<sup>1</sup> are believed by the people to have contained golden treasures, thus changed by the devil to ashes.

<sup>1</sup> Evidently funeral urns.

There is a plant which is believed by both Saxons and Roumanians to possess the virtue of opening every lock and breaking iron fetters, as well as helping to the discovery of hidden treasures. The Roumanians call it *jarbe cherului* (iron grass or herb), and it is only efficacious when it has sprouted at the spot where a rainbow has touched the earth. The rainbow is the bridge on which the angels go backwards and forwards between earth and heaven, and the flower grows there where an angel has dropped his golden key of Paradise on to the earth. The Germans call the flower *Schlüssel Blume* (key-flower), and it may be recognised by having a heart-shaped leaf on which is a spot like a drop of gold or blood. There are several places in Transylvania where the plant is supposed to grow, but he who walks over it unheeding will be sure to lose his way. In order to find it, it is recommended to go out at daybreak and creep on all-fours over the grass. Who finds it should cut open the ball of his left hand and let the leaf grow into the wound; he will then have power to break fetters and open locks. The celebrated robber F—— is said to have been in possession of such a leaf, till the police destroyed his powers by cutting it out of his hand. Horses whose fore-legs are tethered together by chains are sometimes set free when they

happen to tread on the *jarbe cherului*; and in the village of Heltau a Saxon peasant once hit upon the device of putting his wife in chains and thus driving her over the fields, expecting to find the flower where the fetters should fall off.

Whoever sells land in certain parts of the country where gold is supposed to be buried, is always careful to endorse the reservation of eventual treasures to be found on the spot.

But the people say that it is rarely good to seek for hidden treasures, for much of the gold buried in the country has been secured by a heavy curse, so that he who raises it will be pursued by illness or misfortune to himself and his family, unless he is descended in direct line from the man who buried the treasure. Only such treasures as lie above ground exposed to the light of day may be appropriated without misgiving. Many men have lost their reason, or have become crippled or blind, but few indeed were ever made happy by gold dug out of the earth.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## THE TZIGANES : LISZT AND LENAÜ.

AMONG the many writers who have made of this singular race their special study, none, to my thinking, has succeeded in understanding them so perfectly as Liszt. Other authors have analysed and described the gipsies with scientific accuracy, but their opinions are mostly tinged by prejudice or enthusiasm ; for while Grellnan approaches the subject with evident repugnance, like a naturalist dissecting some nauseous reptile in the interests of science, Borrow, on the contrary, idealises his figures almost beyond recognition. Perhaps it needed a Hungarian to do justice to this subject, for the Hungarian is the only man who, to some extent, is united by sympathetic bonds to the Tzigane : he alone has succeeded in identifying himself with the gipsy mind, and comprehending all the strange contradictions of this living paradox.

I cannot, therefore, do better than quote (in

somewhat free translation) some passages from Liszt's valuable work on gipsy music, which, far more vividly than any words of mine, will serve to sketch the portrait of the Hungarian Tzigane.

"There started up one day betwixt the European nations an unknown tribe, a strange people of whom none was able to say who they were nor whence they had come. They spread themselves over our continent, manifesting, however, neither desire of conquest nor ambition to acquire the right of a fixed domicile; not attempting to lay claim to so much as an inch of land, but not suffering themselves to be deprived of a single hour of their time: not caring to command, they neither chose to obey. They had nothing to give of their own, and were content to owe nothing to others. They never spoke of their native land, and gave no clue as to from which Asiatic or African plains they had wandered, nor what troubles or persecutions had necessitated their expatriation. Strangers alike to memory as to hope, they kept aloof from the benefits of colonisation; and too proud of their melancholy race to suffer admixture with other nations, they lived on, satisfied with the rejection of every foreign element. Deriving no advantage from the Christian civilisation around them, they regarded with equal repugnance every other form of religion.

“This singular race, so strange as to resemble no other—possessing neither country, history, religion, nor any sort of codex—seems only to continue to exist because it does not choose to cease to be, and only cares to exist such as it has always been.

“Instruction, authority, persuasion, and persecution, have alike been powerless to reform, modify, or exterminate the gipsies. Broken up into wandering tribes and hordes, roving hither and thither as chance or



*Gipsy type.*

fancy directs, without means of communication, and mostly ignoring each other's existence, they nevertheless betray their common relationship by unmistakable signs—the self-same type of feature, the same language, the identical habits and customs.

“With a senseless or sublime contempt for what ever binds or hampers, the Tziganes ask nothing from the earth but life, and preserve their individuality from constant intercourse with nature, as well as by absolute indifference to all those not belonging to their race, with whom they only commune as far as requisite for obtaining the common necessities of life.

“Like the Jews, they have natural taste and ability for fraud; but unlike them, it is without systematic hatred or malice. Hatred and revenge are with them only personal and accidental feelings, never premeditated ones. Harmless when their immediate wants are satisfied, they are incapable of preconceived intention of injuring, only wishing to preserve a freedom akin to that of the wild horse of the plains, and not comprehending how any one can prefer a roof, be it ever so fine, to the shelter of the forest canopy.

“Authority, rules, laws, principles, duties, and obligations, are alike incomprehensible ideas to this singular race—partly from indolence of spirit, partly from indifference to the evils engendered by their irregular mode of life.

“Such only as it is, the Tzigane loves his life, and would exchange it for no other. He loves his life when slumbering in a copse of young birch-trees: he fancies himself surrounded by a group of slender



maidens, their long floating hair bestrewed with shining sapphire stones, their graceful figures swayed by the breeze into voluptuous and coquetish gestures, as though each were trembling and thrilling under the kiss of an invisible lover. The Tzigane loves his life when for hours together his eyes idly follow the geometrical figures described in the sky overhead by the strategical evolutions of a flight of rooks; when he gauges his cunning against that of the wary bustard, or overcomes the silvery trout in a trial of lightning-like agility. He loves his life when, shaking the wild crab-apple tree, he causes a hailstorm of ruddy fruit to come pouring down upon him; when he picks the unripe berries from off a thorny branch, leaving the sandy earth flecked with drops of gory red, like a deserted battle-field; when bending over a murmuring woodland spring, whose grateful coolness refreshes his parched throat as its gurgling music delights his ear; when he hears the woodpecker tapping a hollow stem, or can distinguish the faint sound of a distant mill-wheel. He loves his life when, gazing on the grey-green waters of some lonely mountain lake, its surface spellbound in the dawning presentiment of approaching frost, he lets his vagrant fancy float hither and thither unchecked; when reclining high up on the branch of some lofty forest-tree, hammock-like he is rocked to and fro,

while each leaf around him seems quivering with ecstasy at the song of the nightingale. He loves his life when, out of the myriads of ever-twinkling stars in the illimitable space overhead, he chooses out one to be his own particular sweetheart; when he falls in love, to-day with a gorgeous lilac-bush of overwhelming perfume, to-morrow with a slender hawthorn or graceful eglantine, to be as quickly forgotten at sight of a brilliant peacock-feather, with which, as with a victorious war-trophy, he adorns his cap; when he sits by the smouldering camp-fire under ancient oaks or massive beeches; when, lying awake at night, he hears the call of the stag and the lowing of the respondent doe; when he has no other society but the forest animals, with whom he forms friendships and enmities—caressing or tormenting them, depriving them of liberty or setting them free, revelling in the treasures of nature like a wanton child despoiling his parent's riches, but well knowing their wealth to be inexhaustible.

“What he calls life is to inhale the breath of nature with every pore of his body; to surfeit his eye with all her forms and colours; with his ear greedily to absorb all her chords and harmonies. Life for him is to multiply the possession of all these things by the kaleidoscopic and phantasmagorical effects of alcohol, then to sing and play, shout, laugh, and dance, till utter exhaustion!

“Having neither Bible nor Gospels to go by, the Tziganes do not see the necessity of fatiguing their brain by the contemplation of abstract ideas; and obeying their instincts only, their intelligence naturally grows rusty. Conscious of their harmlessness, they bask in the rays of the sun, content in the satisfaction of a few primitive and elementary passions—the *sans-gêne* of their soul fettered by no conventional virtues.

“What strength of indolence! What utter want of all social instinct must these people possess in order to live as they have done for centuries, like that strange plant, native of the sandy desert, so aptly termed the wind’s bride, which, by nature devoid of root, and blown from side to side by every breeze, yet bears flower and fruit wherever it goes, continuing to put out shoots under the most unlikely conditions!

“And whenever the Tziganes have endeavoured to bring themselves to a settled mode of life and to adopt domestic habits, have they not invariably sooner or later returned to their hard couch on the cold ground, to their miserable rags, to their rough comrades and the brown beauty of their women?—to the sombre shades of the virgin forests, to the murmur of unknown fountains, to their glowing camp-fires and their improvised concerts under a starlit sky?—to their intoxicating dances in the

lighting of a forest glade, to the merry knavery of their thievish pranks—in a word, to the hundred excitements they cannot do without ?

“Nature, when once indulged in to the extent of becoming a necessity, becomes tyrannical like any other passion ; and the charms of such an existence can neither be explained nor coldly analysed—only he who has tasted of them can value their power aright. He must needs have slumbered often beneath the canopy of the starry heavens ; have been oft awakened by the darts of the rising sun shooting like fiery arrows between his eyelids ; have felt, without horror, the glossy serpent coil itself caressingly round a naked limb ; must have spent full many a long summer day reclining immovable on the sward, overlapped by billowy waves of flowery grasses which have never felt the mower’s scythe ; he must often have listened to the rich orchestral effects and tempestuous melodies which the hurricane loves to draw from vibrating pine-stems, or slender quaking reeds ; he must be able to recognise each tree by its perfume, be initiated into all the varied languages of the feathered tribes, of merry finches, and of chattering grasshoppers ; full often must he have ridden at close of day over the barren wold, when the rays of the setting sun cast a golden glamour over the atmosphere, and all around is plunged in a bath of

living fire; he must have watched the red-hot moon rise out of the sable night over lonely plains whence all life seems to have fled away; he must, in short, have lived like the Tzigane in order to comprehend that it is impossible to exist without the balmy perfumes exhaled by the forests; that one cannot find rest within stone-built prisons; that a breast accustomed to draw full draughts of the purest ozone, feels weighed down and crushed beneath a sheltering roof; that the eye which has daily looked on the rising sun breaking out through pearly clouds must weep, forsooth, when met on all sides by dull, opaque walls; that the ear hungers when deprived of the loud modulations, of the exquisite harmonies, of which the mountain breeze alone has the secret.

“What have our cities to offer to senses surfeited with such ever-varied effects and emotions? What in such eyes can ever equal the bloody drama of a dying sun? What can rival in voluptuous sweetness the rosy halo of early dawn? What other voice can equal in majesty the thunder-roll of a midsummer storm, to which the woodland echoes respond as the voice of a mighty chorus? What elegy so exquisite as the autumn wind stripping the foliage from the blighted forest? What power can equal the frigid majesty of the cruel frost, like an implacable tyrant bidding the sap of trees to

stand still, and rendering silent the voices of singing birds and babbling streams? To those accustomed to quaff of this bottomless tankard, must not all other pleasures by comparison appear empty and meaningless?

“Indifferent to the minute and complicated passions by which educated mankind is swayed, callous to the panting, gasping effects of such microscopic and super-cultured vices as vanity, ambition, intrigue, and avarice, the Tzigane only comprehends the simplest requirements of a primitive nature. Music, dancing, drinking, and love, diversified by a childish and humorous delight in petty thieving and cheating, constitute his whole *répertoire* of passions, beyond whose limited horizon he does not care to look.”

Having begun this chapter with the words of Liszt, let me finish it with those of the German poet Lenau, who, in his short poem “Die drei Zigeuner” (“The three Gipsies”), traces a perfect picture of the indolent enjoyment of the gipsy’s existence:—

“One day, in the shade of a willow-tree laid,  
I came upon gipsies three,  
As through the sand of wild moorland  
My cart toiled wearily.

Giving to nought but himself a thought,  
His fiddle the first did hold,

While 'mid the blaze of the evening rays  
A fiery lay he trolled.

His pipe with the lip the second did grip,  
A-watching the smoke that curled,  
As void of care as nothing there were  
Could better him in the world.

The third in sleep lay slumbering deep,  
On a branch swung his guitar ;  
Through its strings did stray the winds at play,  
His soul was 'mid dreams afar,

With a patch or two of rainbow hue,  
Tattered their garb and torn ;  
But little recked they what the world might say,  
Repaying its scorn with scorn.

And they taught to me, these gipsies three,  
When life is saddened and cold,  
How to dream or play or puff it away,  
Despising it threefold !

And oft on my track I would fain cast back  
A glance behind me there—  
A glance at that crew of tawny hue,  
With their swarthy shocks of hair."

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## THE TZIGANES : THEIR LIFE AND OCCUPATIONS.

IN every other country where the gipsies made their appearance they were oppressed and persecuted—treated as slaves, or hunted down like wild beasts. So in Prussia in 1725 an edict was issued ordering that each gipsy found within the confines of the country should be forthwith executed ; and in Wallachia, until quite lately, they were regarded as slaves or beasts of burden, and bought and sold like any other marketable animal. Thus a Bucharest newspaper of 1845 advertises for sale two hundred gipsy families, to be disposed of in batches of five families — a handsome deduction being offered to wholesale purchasers. In Moldavia, up to 1825, a master who killed one of his own gipsies was never punished by law, but only if he killed one which was the property of another man—the crime in that case not being considered to be murder, but merely injury to another man's property.



In Hungary alone these wanderers found themselves neither oppressed nor repulsed, and if the gipsy can be said to feel at home anywhere on the face of the globe, it is surely here; and although Hungarians are apt to resent the designation, Tissot was not far wrong when he named their country "*Le pays des Tziganes*," for the Tziganes are in Hungary a picturesque feature—a decorative adjunct inseparable alike from the solitude of its plains as from the dissipation of its cities. Like a gleam of dusky gems, they serve to set off every picture of Hungarian life, and to play to it a running accompaniment in plaintive minor chords. No one can travel many days in Hungary without becoming familiar with the strains of the gipsy bands. And who has journeyed by night without noting the ruddy light of their myriad camp-fires, which, like so many gigantic glow-worms, dot the country in all directions?

At the present time there are in Hungary above 150,000 Tziganes, of which about 80,000 fall to the share of Transylvania, which therefore in still more special degree may be termed the land of gipsies.

The Transylvanian gipsies used to stand under the nominal authority of a nobleman bearing the title of a Gipsy Count, chosen by the reigning prince; as also in Hungary proper the Palatine had the right of naming four gipsy Woywods. To

this Gipsy Count the chieftains of the separate hordes or bands were bound to submit, besides paying to him a yearly tribute of one florin per head of each member of the band; and every seventh year they assembled round him to receive his orders. The minor chieftains were elected by the votes of the separate communities; and to this day every wandering troop has its own self-elected leader, although these have no longer any recognised position in the eyes of the law.

The election usually takes place in the open field, often on the occasion of some public fair; and the successful candidate is thrice raised in the air on the shoulders of the people, presented with gifts, and invested with a silver-headed staff as badge of his dignity. Also his wife or partner receives similar honours, and the festivities conclude with much heavy drinking.

Strictly speaking, only such Tziganes are supposed to be eligible as are descended from a Woywod family; but in point of fact the gipsies mostly choose whoever happens to be best dressed on the occasion. Being of handsome build, and not over young, are likewise points in a candidate's favour; but such superfluous qualities as goodness or wisdom are not taken into account.

This leader—who is sometimes called the Captain, sometimes the *Vagda*, or else the *Gako* or

uncle—governs his band, confirms marriages and divorces, dictates punishments, and settles disputes; and as the gipsies are a very quarrelsome race, the chief of a large band has got his hands pretty full. He has likewise the power to excommunicate a member of the band, as well as to reinstate him in honour and confidence by letting him drink out of his own tankard.

Certain taxes are paid to the *Gako*; also he is entitled to percentages on all booty and theft. In return, it is his duty to protect and defend his people to the best of his ability, whenever their irregularities have brought them within reach of the law.

Whether, besides the chieftains of the separate hordes, there yet exists in Hungary a chief judge or monarch of the Tziganes, cannot be positively asserted; but many people aver such to be the case, and designate either Mikolcz or Schemnitz as the seat of his residence. In his hands are said to be deposited large sums of money for secret purposes, and he alone has the right to condemn to death, and with his own hands to put his sentence into execution.

No Tzigane durst ever accept the position of a gendarme or policeman, for fear of being obliged to punish his own folk; and only very rarely is it allowed for one of them to become a gamekeeper or woodranger.

Only the necessity of obtaining a piece of bread to still his hunger, or of providing himself with a rag to cover his nakedness, occasionally obliges the Tzigane to turn his hand to labour of some kind. Most sorts of work are distasteful to him—more especially all work of a calm, monotonous character. For that reason the idyllic calm of a shepherd's existence which the Roumanian so dearly loves, could never satisfy the Tzigane; and equally unpalatable he finds the sweating toils of the agriculturist. He requires some occupation which gives scope to the imagination and amuses the fancy while his hands are employed—conditions he finds united in the trade of a blacksmith, which he oftenest plies on the banks of a stream or river outside the village, where he has been driven by necessity. The snorting bellows seem to him like a companionable monster; the equal cadence of the hammer against the anvil falls in with melodies floating in his brain; the myriads of flying sparks, in which he loves to discern all sorts of fantastic figures, fill him with delight; horses and oxen coming to be shod, and the varied incidents to which these operations give rise, are never-tiring sources of interest and amusement.

Instinctively expert at some sorts of work, the Tzigane will be found to be as curiously awkward and incapable with others. Thus he is always



GIPSY TINKER.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY MADAME KAMILLA ASBOTH HERMANSTADT.



handy at throwing up earthworks, which he seems to do as naturally as a mole or rabbit digs its burrow; but as carpenter or locksmith he is comparatively useless, and though an apt reaper with the sickle, he is incapable of using the scythe.

All brickmaking in Hungary and Transylvania



*Basket-maker.*

is in the hands of the Tziganes, and formerly they were charged with the gold-washing in the Transylvanian rivers, and were in return exempted from military service. They are also flayers, broom binders, ratcatchers, basket-makers, tinkers, and occasionally tooth-pullers—dentist is too ambitious a denomination.

Up to the end of the sixteenth century in Transylvania the part of hangman was always enacted by a gipsy, usually taken on the spot. On one occasion the individual to be hanged happening to be himself a gipsy, there was some difficulty in finding an executioner, and the only one produced was a feeble old man, quite unequal to the job. A table placed under a tree was to serve as scaffold, and with trembling fingers the old man proceeded to attach the rope round the neck of his victim. All his efforts were, however, vain to fix this rope to the branch above, and the doomed man, at last losing patience at the protracted delay, gave a vigorous box on the ear to his would-be hangman, which knocked him off the table. Instantly all the spectators, terrified, took to their heels; whereon the culprit, securely fastening the rope to the branch above, proceeded unaided to hang himself in the most correct fashion.

When obliged to work under supervision, the Tzigane groans and moans piteously, as though he were enduring the most acute tortures; and a single Tzigane locked up in jail will howl so despairingly as to deprive a whole village of sleep.

The Tzigane makes a bad soldier but a good spy: his cowardice has passed into a proverb, which says that "with a wet rag you can put to flight a whole village of gipsies."



The Tziganes are by no means dainty with regard to food, and have a decided leaning towards carrion, indiscriminately eating of the flesh of all fallen animals, or, as they term it, whatever has been killed by "God," and consider themselves much aggrieved when forced at the point of the bayonet to abandon the rotting carcass of a sheep or cow, over which they had been holding a harmless revelry.

A hedgehog divested of its spikes is considered a prime delicacy ; likewise a fox baked under the ashes, after having been laid in



*Bear-driver.*

running water for two days to reduce the flavour. Horse-flesh alone they do not touch.

The only animals whose training the gipsy cares to undertake are the horse and bear. For the first he entertains a sort of respectful veneration, while

the second he regards as an amusing *bajazzo*. He teaches a young bear to dance by placing it on a sheet of heated iron, playing the while on his fiddle a strongly accentuated piece of dance music. The bear, lifting up its legs alternately to escape the heat, unconsciously observes the time marked by the music. Later on the heated iron is suppressed when the animal has learnt its lesson, and whenever the Tzigane begins to play on the fiddle the young bear lifts its legs in regular time to the music.

Of the tricks practised upon horses in order to sell them at fairs, many stories are told of the gipsies. Sometimes, it is said, they will make an incision in the animal's skin, and blow in air with the bellows in order to make it appear fat; or else they introduce a living eel into its body under the tail, which serves to give an appearance of liveliness to the hind-quarters. For the same reason live toads are forced down a donkey's throat, which, moving about in the stomach, produce a sort of fever which keeps it lively for several days.

The gipsies are attached to their children, but in a senseless animal fashion, alternately devouring them with caresses and violently ill-treating them. I have seen a father throw large heavy stones at his ten-year-old daughter for some trifling mis-

demeanour—stones as large as good-sized turnips, any one of which would have been sufficient to kill her if it had happened to hit; and only her alacrity in dodging these missiles—which she did grinning and chuckling as though it were the best joke in the world—saved her from serious injury.

They are a singularly quarrelsome people, and the gipsy camp is the scene of many a pitched battle, in which men, women, children, and dogs indiscriminately take part with turbulent enjoyment. When in a passion, all weapons are good that come to the gipsy's hand, and, *faute de mieux*, unfortunate infants are sometimes bandied backwards and forwards as *improvisé* cannon-balls. A German traveller mentions having been eyewitness to a quarrel between a Tzigane man and woman, the latter having a baby on the breast. Passing from words to blows, and seeing neither stick nor stone within handy reach, the man seized the baby by the feet, and with it belaboured the woman so violently, that when the bystanders were able to interpose, the wretched infant had already given up the ghost.

The old-fashioned belief that gipsies are in the habit of stealing children has long since been proved to be utterly without foundation. Why, indeed, should gipsies, already endowed with a numerous progeny, seek to burden themselves with

foreign elements which can bring them no sort of profit? That they frequently have beguiled children out of reach in order to strip them of their clothes and ornaments has probably given rise to this mistake; and when, as occasionally, we come across a light-complexioned child in a gipsy camp, it is more natural to suppose its mother to have been the passing fancy of some fair-haired stranger, than itself to have been abstracted from wealthy parents.

Tzigane babies are at once inured to the utmost extremes of heat and cold. If they are born in winter, they are rubbed with snow; if in summer, anointed with grease and laid in the burning sun. Though trained to resist all weathers, the Tzigane has a marked antipathy for wind, which seems for the time to weaken his physical and mental powers, and deprive him of all life and energy. Cold he patiently endures; but only in summer can he really be said to live and enjoy his life. There is a legend which tells how the gipsies, pining under the heavy frosts and snows with which the earth was visited, appealed to God to have pity on them, and to grant them always twice as many summers as winters. The Almighty, in answer to this request, spoke as follows: "Two summers shall you have to every winter; but as it would disturb the order of nature if both summers came one

on the back of the other, I shall always give you two summers, with a winter between to divide them." The gipsies humbly thanked the Almighty for the granted favour, and never again complained of the cold, for, as they say, they have now always two summers to every winter.

Another legend relates how the Tziganes once used to have corn-fields of their own, and how, when the green corn had grown high for the first time, the wind caused it to wave and shake like ripples on the water, which seeing, a gipsy boy came running in alarm to his parents, crying, "Father, father! quick, make haste! the corn is running away!" On hearing this the gipsies all hastened forth with knives and sickles to cut down the fugitive corn, which of course never ripened; and discouraged by their first agricultural essay, the gipsies never attempted to sow or reap again.

Both Maria Theresa and her son Joseph II. did much to induce the Transylvanian gipsies to renounce their vagrant habits and settle down as respectable citizens, but their efforts did not meet with the success they deserved. The system of Maria Theresa was no less than to recast the whole gipsy nature in a new mould, and by fusion with other races, to cause them by degrees to lose their own identity: the very name of gipsy was to be forgotten, and the empress had ordained that

henceforward they were to be known by the appellation of *Neubauer* (new peasants). With a view to this, all marriages between gipsies were forbidden, and the empress undertook to *dot* every young gipsy girl who married a person of another race. The Tziganes, however, too often accepted these favours, and took the earliest opportunity of deserting the partners thus forced upon them ; while the houses built expressly for their use were frequently used for the pigs or cattle, the gipsies themselves preferring to sleep outside in the open air.

A gipsy girl who had married a young Slovak peasant some years ago, used to run away and sleep in the woods whenever her husband was absent from home ; while in another village, where the Saxon pastor had with difficulty induced a wandering Tzigane family to take up their residence in a vacant peasant house, he found them oddly enough established in their old ragged tent, which had been set up *inside* the empty dwelling-room. A story is also told of a gipsy man who, having attained a high military rank in the Austrian army, disappeared one day, and was later recognised with a strolling band.

There is, I am told, a certain method in the seemingly aimless roamings of each nomadic gipsy tribe, which always pursues its wanderings in a given circle, keeping to the self-same paths and the iden-

tical places of bivouac in plain or forest, so that it can mostly be calculated with tolerable accuracy in precisely how many years such and such a band will come round again to any particular neighbourhood.

Nowadays the proportion of resident gipsies in towns and villages is, of course, considerably larger than it used to be, and nearly each Saxon or Hungarian town and village has a *faubourg* of miserable earth hovels tacked on to it at one end. It is not uncommon, in these gipsy hovels, to find touches of luxury strangely out of keeping with the rest of the surroundings: pieces of rare old china, embroidered pillow-cases, sometimes even a silver goblet or platter of distinct value,—to which things they often cling with a sort of blind superstition, always contriving to reclaim from the pawnbroker whatever of these articles they have been compelled to deposit there in a season of necessity. In the same way it is alleged that many of the wandering gipsy hordes in Hungary and Transylvania have in their possession valuable gold and silver vessels (some of these engraved in ancient Indian characters), which they carry about wherever they go, and bury in the earth wherever they pitch their temporary camp.

In order to count the treasures of one of the resident gipsies, it suffices to watch him when

there is a fire in the village: ten to one it will be his fiddle which he first takes care to save, and next his bed and pillows—a soft swelling bed and numerous downy pillows being among the principal luxuries to which he is addicted.

Characteristic of the Tzigane's utter incomprehension of all social organisation and privileges, is an anecdote related by a Transylvanian proprietor. "In 1848," he told me, "when serfdom was abolished in Austria, and the gipsies residing in my village became aware that henceforward they were free, they were at first highly delighted at the news, and spent three days and nights in joyful carousing. On the fourth day, however, when the novelty of being free had worn off, they were at a loss what use to make of their novel dignity, and numbers of them came trooping to me begging to be taken back. They did not care to be free after all, they said, and would rather be serfs again."

Of their past history, the only memory the Tziganes have preserved is that of the disastrous day of Nagy Ida, when a thousand of their people were slain. This was in 1557, when Perenyi, in want of soldiers, had intrusted to a thousand gipsies the fortress of Nagy Ida, which they defended so valiantly that the Imperial troops beat a retreat. But intoxicated with their triumph, the



Tziganes called after the retreating enemy that but for the lack of gunpowder they would have served them still worse. On hearing this the army turned round again, and easily forcing an entrance into the castle, cut down the gipsies to the last man.

All Hungarian gipsies keep the anniversary of this day as a day of mourning, and have a particular melody in which they bewail the loss of their heroes. This tune or *nota* they never play before a stranger, and the mere mention of it is sufficient to sadden them.

Only the higher class of Tzigane musicians (of which hereafter) are fond of calling themselves Hungarians, and of wearing the Hungarian national costume. This reminds me of a story I heard of a gipsy player who, brought to justice for a murder he had committed, obstinately persisted in denying his crime.

"Come, be a good fellow," said the judge at last, fixing on the weak side of the culprit; "show what a good Hungarian you are by speaking the truth. A true Hungarian never tells a lie."

The poor gipsy was so much flattered at being called a Hungarian that he instantly confessed the murder, and was, of course, hanged as the reward of his veracity.

Though without any regular social organisation,

the Hungarian gipsies may yet be loosely divided into five classes, which range as follows :—

1. The musicians.
2. The gold-washers, who also make bricks and spoons.
3. The smiths.
4. The daily labourers, such as whitewashers, masons, &c.
5. The nomadic tent gipsies.

If, however, we reverse the order of things, and turn the social ladder upside down, these latter may well be ranked as the first, and so they deem themselves to be, for do they not enjoy privileges unknown to most respectable citizens?—free as the birds of the air, paying no taxes, acknowledging no laws, and making the whole world their own!

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE TZIGANES : HUMOUR—PROVERBS—RELIGION  
AND MORALITY.

THE word Tzigane is used throughout Hungary and Transylvania as an opprobrious term by the other inhabitants whenever they want to designate anything as false, worthless, dirty, adulterated, &c.

"False as a Tzigane," "dirty as a Tzigane," are common figures of speech. Likewise to describe a quarrelsome couple, "They live like the gipsies." And if some one is given to useless lamentation, it is said of him, "He moans like a guilty Tzigane."

Of a liar, it is said that "he knows how to plough with the Tzigane," or that "he understands how to ride the Tzigane horse."

To call any one's behaviour "gipsified," is to stamp it as dishonest. "He knows the Tzigane trade" is "he knows how to steal."

A showery April day is called "Tzigane weather ;" adulterated honey, "Tzigane honey ;" coriander-

leaves, "Tzigane parsley;" a poor sort of wild duck is the "Tzigane duck;" the *Bromus scalinus* is the "Tzigane corn;" but why the little green burs are called "Tzigane lice" is not very evident, for surely in this case the imitation has decidedly the advantage of the genuine article.

These phrases must not, however, be taken to express hatred, but rather a good-natured sort of contempt and indulgence for the Tzigane as a large, importunate, and troublesome child, who frequently requires to be chastised and pushed back, but whose vagaries cannot be taken seriously, or provoke anger.

The Tziganes are rarely wanting in a certain sense of humour and power of repartee, which often disarms the anger they have justly provoked. In a travelling menagerie the keeper, showing off his animals to a large audience, pointed to the cage where a furious lion was pawing the ground, and pompously announced that he was ready to give a thousand florins to whoever would enter that cage.

"I will," said a starved-looking gipsy, stepping forward.

"You will!" said the keeper, looking contemptuously at the small puny figure. "Very well; please yourself, and walk in," and he made a feint

of opening the door. "Step in ; why are you not coming ?"

"Certainly," said the Tzigane ; "I have not the slightest objection, and am only waiting till you remove that very unpleasant-looking animal which occupies the cage at present."

Of course the laugh was turned against the showman, who, in his speech, had only spoken of the cage without mentioning the lion.

A peasant accusing a Tzigane of having stolen his horse, declared that he could produce half-a-dozen witnesses who had seen him in the act.

"What are half-a-dozen witnesses?" said the gipsy. "I can produce a whole dozen who have not seen it!"

A starving and shivering Tzigane once, craving hospitality, was told to choose between food and warmth. Would he have something to eat? or did he prefer to warm himself at the hearth? "If you please," he answered, "I would like best to toast myself a piece of bacon at the fire."

When asked which was his favourite bird, a Tzigane made reply, "The pig, if it had only wings."

Another gipsy, asked whether, for the remuneration of five florins, he would undertake the office of hangman on a single victim, answered joyfully, "Oh, that is far too high a price! For five florins

I would undertake to hang all the officials into the bargain !”

Some Tzigane proverbs are as follows :—

“ Better a donkey which lets you ride, than a fine horse which throws you off.”

“ Those are the fattest fishes which fall back from the line into the water.”

“ It is not good to choose women or cloth by candle-light.”

“ What is the use of a kiss, unless there be two to share it ?”

“ Who would steal potatoes must not forget the sack.”

“ Two hard stones do not grind smooth.”

“ Polite words cost little and do much.”

“ Who flatters you has either cheated you or hopes to do so.”

“ Who waits till another calls him to supper, often remains hungry.”

“ If you have lost your horse, you had better throw away saddle and bridle as well.”

“ The best smith cannot make more than one ring at a time.”

“ A pleasant smile smooths away wrinkles.”

“ Nothing is so bad but it is good enough for some one.”

“ Do we keep the fast-days ? Yes, when there is neither bread nor bacon in the cupboard.”

"It is of no use to teach science to children, unless we explain it by means of the broomstick."

"Let nothing on earth sadden you as long as you still can love."

"It is easier to inherit than to earn."

"As long as there are poorer people than yourself in the world, thank God—even if you go about with bare feet."

"When the bridge is gone, then even the narrowest plank becomes precious."

"Only the deaf and the blind are obliged to believe."

"Bacon makes bold."

"After misfortune comes fortune."

"Who has got luck, need only sit at home with his mouth open."

"Never despair of your luck, for it needs only a moment to bring it."

There is no such thing as a gipsy church, and a legend current in Transylvania explains the reason of this:—

"Once upon a time"—so it runs—"the Tziganes had a right good church, solidly built of brick and stone like other churches. The Wallacks, who had neither stones nor bricks, had at that same time built themselves a church out of cheese and bacon, with sausage rafters and pancake roof.

"This building filled the greedy Tziganes with envy, causing them to lick their lips whenever they passed that way, and at last they proposed an exchange of churches to the Wallacks, who gladly accepted the bargain. But when the winter came, the hungry Tziganes began to nibble at the pancake roof of their church; next they attacked the rafters, and there soon remained nothing more of the whole building. That is why since that time there has never been a Tzigane church again, and why the gipsies, whenever they go to any place of worship at all, prefer to go to the Roumanian church, because, as they say, they like to remember that it once belonged to them."

This story has passed into a proverb, used to describe a man without religion, by saying, "He eats his faith, as the gipsies ate their church."

Their religion is of the vaguest description. They generally agree as to the existence of a God, but it is a God whom they fear without loving. "God cannot be good," they say, "or else He would not make us die." The devil they also believe in to a certain extent, but consider him to be a weak, silly fellow, incapable of doing much harm.

A Tzigane, questioned as to whether he believed in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the body, scoffed at the idea. "How could I



be so foolish as to believe this?" he said, with unconscious philosophy. "We have been quite wretched enough and wicked enough in this world already. Why should we begin again in another?"

Sometimes their confused notions of Christianity take the form of believing in a God, and in His Son the young God; but while many are of opinion that the old God is dead, and that His Son now reigns in His place, others declare the old God to be not really dead, but merely to have abdicated in favour of His Son. Others, again, suppose this latter to be not really the Son of the old God, but only that of a poor carpenter, and are wont to say contemptuously that "the carpenter's son has usurped the throne."

The resident Tziganes often nominally adopt the religion of the landed proprietor—principally, it seems, because in former days they thus secured the privilege of being buried at his expense. Whenever they happen to have a quarrel with their landlord, they are fond of abruptly changing their religion, ostentatiously going to some other place of worship in order to mark their displeasure.

Two clergymen, the one Catholic, the other Protestant, visiting a Tzigane confined in prison, were each endeavouring with much eloquence to convert him to their respective religions. The gipsy appeared to be listening to their arguments

with great attention, and when both had finished speaking, he eagerly inquired, "Which of the two gentlemen can give me a cigar?" One of these being in the advantageous position of gratifying this modest request, the scale was thereby turned in favour of the Church he recommended, and the other clergyman was sent away, doubtless with the bitter reflection that for lack of a pennyworth of tobacco he had failed to secure an immortal soul!

Another gipsy, in prison for having sworn falsely, was visited by a priest, who tried to convince him of the sinfulness of his conduct in swearing to what he had not seen.

"You are loading a heavy sin on your soul," said the priest.

"Have I got a soul?" asked the Tzigane, innocently.

"Of course you have got a soul; every man has one."

"Can your reverence swear that I have got a soul?"

"To be sure I can."

"Yet your reverence cannot see my soul, so why should it be wrong to swear to what one has not seen?"

A gipsy condemned to be hung, bethought himself at the last moment of asking to be baptised.

He wished to die a Christian, he said, having professed no religion all his life. His plan was successful, for the execution was suspended, and all sympathies enlisted in his favour. When, however, all was ready for the baptism, the gipsy occasioned much surprise by asking to be received into the Calvinistic faith. Why not choose the Catholic religion, which was that of the place, he was asked, since there was no apparent reason to the contrary. "No, no," returned the cautious Tzigane; "I will keep the Catholic religion for another time."

Though rarely believing in the immortality of the soul, the Tzigane usually holds with the doctrine of transmigration, and often supposes the spirit of some particular gipsy to have passed into a bat or a bird; further believing that when that animal is killed, the spirit passes back to another new-born gipsy.

However miserable their lives, the Tziganes never commit suicide: only one solitary instance is recorded by some traveller, whose name I forget, of an old gipsy woman, who, to escape her persecutors, begged a shepherd to bury her alive.

When a Tzigane dies, men and women assemble with loud howling, and the corpse, after having been prepared for burial, is carried on horseback to the grave, which is made in some lonely spot,

often deep in the forest. A chieftain is buried with much pomp, his people tearing their hair and scratching their faces in sign of mourning.

The abrupt transitions of joy to grief, and *vice versâ*, so characteristic of the Tzigane nature, are nowhere more apparent than in their rejoicings



*Gipsy girl.*

and their mournings. Thus each funeral ends with dancing and joyful songs, while every wedding terminates in howling and moaning.

The relations between the sexes are mostly free, and unrestrained by any attempt at morality. Unions oftenest take place without any attendant formalities, but in some hordes a sort of barbaric ceremony is kept up. The man, or rather boy—for

he is often not more than fourteen or fifteen years of age—selects the girl happening to please him best, without any particular regard for relationship, and leads her before the judge or *Gako*, where she breaks an earthenware jar or dish at the feet of the man to whom she gives herself. Each party collects a portion of the broken pieces and keeps them carefully. If these pieces are lost, either by accident or voluntarily, then both parties are free, and the union thus dissolved can only be renewed by the breaking of another vessel in the same manner.

The number of pieces into which the earthenware has been shattered is supposed to denote the number of years the couple will live together; and when the girl is anxious to pay a compliment to her bridegroom, she stamps upon the fragments, in order to increase their number.

Sometimes, but rarely, the Tzigane is capable of violent and enduring love; and cases where lovers have killed their sweethearts out of jealousy are not unknown.

The Tziganes assimilate more easily with the Roumanians than with any of the neighbouring races; and marriages between them, although not frequent, yet sometimes take place.

Some twelve or fifteen years ago, an Austrian officer, garisoned in a small Transylvanian town,

fell violently in love with a beautiful gipsy girl belonging to a wandering tribe. He carried his infatuation so far as to offer to marry her. The beautiful Bohemian, however, refused to abandon her roving comrades; and at last the lover, seeing that he could not win her in any other way, and being convinced that he could not possibly exist without her, gave up his military rank, and for her sake became a gipsy himself, wandering about with the band, and sharing all their hardships and privations. How this peculiar union turned out in the end, and whether *à la longue* the gentleman remained of opinion that the world was well lost for love, is unknown; but several years later the *ci-devant* officer was recognised as a member of a roving band of gipsies somewhere in northern Greece.

A touching instance of a young girl's devotion was related to me on good authority. Her lover had been confined in the village lock-up, presumably for some flagrant offence; and looking out of the small grated window, on a burning summer's day, he was bewailing his unhappy fate and the parching thirst which devoured him. Presently his dark slender sweetheart, attracted by the sound of his voice, drew near, and standing at the other side of a dried-up moat, she could see her lover at the grated window. She held in her hand a ripe juicy apple; but the only way to reach him lay

through the moat. The girl was naked, not having the smallest rag to cover her brown and shining skin, and the moat was full of prickly thistles and tall stinging nettles. She hesitated for a moment, but only for one ; then plunging bravely into the sea of fire, she handed up the precious apple through the close grating.

When she regained the opposite bank, the gipsy girl's skin was all blistered, and bleeding at places ; but she did not seem to feel any pain, in the delight with which she watched her captive lover devour the apple.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## THE GIPSY FORTUNE-TELLER.

THE ever-recurring excitements and excesses of which these people's life is made up cannot fail to have a deteriorating effect on mind and body—early undermined constitutions and premature death or dotage being the penalty paid by many for the unbridled and senseless gratification of their passions. This life, however, while it destroys many, sharpens the faculties of those whose stronger natures have enabled them to defy these ravages, bestowing a singular power of penetration in all matters relating to the senses and passions.

More especially is this the case with regard to the women, who, already gifted by nature with keener perceptions, and prematurely ripened in what may be termed a tropical atmosphere of passion, develop an almost supernatural power of clairvoyance, which enables them with incredible celerity to unravel hitherto undisclosed secrets by means only of intuitive deductions.





GIPSY MOTHER AND CHILD.

FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY MADAME KAMILLA ASBOTH, HERMANSTADT.



“The astounding vividness of their impressions” (again to quote Liszt on the subject) “rarely fails to communicate itself like wildfire to the hearers. As by the contagion of a deadly poison, the mere touch of the gipsy fortune-teller is often sufficient to affect them with the sensation of an electric shock or vibration.

“A few apt reflections strewed about in conversation, casual exclamations of apparent simplicity, some primitive rhymes and verses accentuated by passion, so to say hammered into relief like the raised figures on a medal—such are the means which suffice to stir up in an audience whatever elements may be there existing of secret wrath, of latent rebellion, of characters bent but not broken, of affections discouraged but not despairing.

“The gipsy woman, herself well acquainted with all the signs and workings of passion, distinguishes *à coup d'œil* the cause of the sallow cheek and the fevered eye of such another woman; she can feel instinctively whether the hand from which she is expected to decipher a fate be stretched towards her with the hasty gesture of hope or with the hesitation of fear. Without difficulty she reads in disdainfully curled lips or ominously drawn brows whether the youth before her be chafing under a yoke or planning revenge; whether he craves love or has already lost it. She can further distinguish

at a glance the delusive presumption of youth and beauty — the false security of possession which thinks to defy misfortune. She knows the annihilating blows of fate and the vulnerability of the human heart too well not to mistrust the smile of over-conscious happiness, and prophesy misfortune to those who refuse to believe in the instability of the future.

“She cannot be called a hypocrite, for she herself has faith in her own diagnosis: believing that each man carries within him the germ of his own fate, she is convinced that sooner or later her prognostics must be fulfilled. Her only care is therefore to clothe her predictions in a form which, easily captivating the imagination, and thereby impressed on the memory, will spring again to life, along with the image of the prophetess, whenever the latent emotions she has detected, having reached their culminating point, bring about the success or the catastrophe foreseen from the investigation of a hand and a heart.

“After all, why should we wonder that the secrets of the future can be deciphered by one so intimately acquainted with the inmost folds of the human soul, and the workings of different passions confined in the human breast like so many caged lions or torpid slumbering reptiles?

“Passion always accompanied by a powerful sym-

pathetic instinct quickly divines the presence of a kindred passion. Apt to decipher the symptoms inevitably betrayed in voice and gesture, and skilled to read in that mystic book whose characters are so plainly impressed on the leaves of a physiognomy which, betraying where it would fain conceal, becomes the more impressive in proportion as the heart within is agitated by tumultuous throbbings, the gipsy fortune-teller knows full well with whom she has to deal, and can justly estimate what sort of characters are those who seek her counsel."

It is, I think, Balzac who has said, "*Si le passé a laissé des traces, il est à croire que l'avenir possède des racines ;*" and on the principle that every man is master of his own fate, there is, after all, no reason why these roots, invisible to the rest of the world, should not be perceptible to such as have made of this subject the study of a lifetime. Why should not the seer be able to proclaim the fruits to be reaped from the recognition of germs which already exist ?

The enlightened folk who sweepingly condemn the fortune-teller as a liar and cheat are probably no less mistaken than witless rustics, who blindly believe in her as an infallible oracle. Should not precisely the superior enlightenment of which we boast be argument for, rather than against, the

fortune-teller? Why, if phrenology and graphology are permitted to take rank as acknowledged sciences, should not the gipsy woman's power of divination be equally allowed to count as a shrewd deciphering of character, coupled with logical deductions as to the events likely to be evoked by the passions she has recognised, when brought into combination with a given set of circumstances?

Ignorant people, surprised at the detection of secrets which they had believed to be securely locked up in their own breast, and not understanding the process by which such conclusions were reached, are ready to attribute the fortune-teller's power of divination to supernatural agency, which opinion is strengthened and confirmed by the romantic conditions of the gipsy's existence, and the cabalistic glamour with which she contrives to invest herself.

But is not, in truth, this delicate and subtle perception in itself a secret and undeniable power—a sudden inspiration, a positive intuition of what will be from the rapid unveiling of what already is? And here, again, Liszt is probably right in asserting this gift of prophecy, so universally ascribed to the gipsies in all countries, to be a too deeply rooted belief in the minds of the people, not to have some rational ground for its existence.

There is no doubt that the gipsy fortune-tellers

in Transylvania exercise considerable influence on their Saxon and Roumanian neighbours, and it is a paradoxical fact that the self-same people who regard the Tziganes as undoubted thieves, liars, and cheats in all the common transactions of daily life, do not hesitate to confide in them blindly for charmed medicines and love-potions, and are ready to attribute to them unerring power in deciphering the mysteries of the future.

The Saxon peasant will, it is true, often drive away the fortune-teller with blows and curses from his door, but his wife will as often secretly beckon her in again by the back entrance, in order to be consulted as to the illness of the cows, or beg from her a remedy against the fever.

Wonderful potions and salves, composed of the fat of bears, dogs, snakes, and snails, along with the oil of rain-worms, the bodies of spiders and midges, rubbed into a paste, are concocted by these cunning Bohemians, who thus sometimes contrive to make thrice as much money out of the carcass of a dead dog as another can realise from the sale of a healthy pig or calf. There is not a village in Transylvania which cannot boast of one or more such fortune-tellers, and living in the suburbs of each town are many old women who make an easy and comfortable livelihood out of the credulity of their fellow-creatures.

It has also been asserted that both Roumanian and Saxon mothers whose sickly infants are believed to be suffering from the effects of the evil eye, are often in the habit of giving the child to be nursed for a period of nine days to some Tzigane woman supposed to have power to undo the spell.

For my own part, I have seldom had inclination to confide the deciphering of my fate to one of these wandering sibyls, and can therefore only affirm that on the solitary occasion when, half in jest, I chose to interrogate the future, I was favoured with a piece of intelligence so startling and improbable as could only be received with a laugh of derision; yet before many days had elapsed, this startling and improbable event had actually come to pass, and the gipsy's prophecy was accomplished in the most unlooked-for manner.

Chance probably, or coincidence, most people will say, and indeed I do not myself see how it could have been anything but the veriest coincidence. I merely state this fact as it occurred, and without attempting to draw any general conclusions from the isolated instance within my own personal range of observation.



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

## THE TZIGANE MUSICIAN.

THERE is a Transylvanian legend telling how a mother once pronounced on her son a curse, the effect of which should continue until he succeeded in giving a voice to a dry piece of wood.

The son left his mother, and went sorrowing into the pine-forest, where he cut down a tree; and made a fiddle on which he played; and his mother hearing the sound, came running by and took the curse from off his head.

This story must surely have been written of a gipsy boy, for of none other could it have been equally appropriate; and if to the gipsy woman is given a certain power over the minds of her fellow-creatures, the male Tzigane—at least in Hungary—is not without his sceptre, and this sceptre is the bow with which he plies his fiddle.

Hungarian music and the Tzigane player are indispensable conditions of each other's existence. Hungarian music can only be rightly interpreted by the Tzigane musician, who for his part can play none other so well as the Hungarian music, into whose execution he throws all his heart and his soul, all his latent passion and unconscious poetry—the melancholy and dissatisfied yearnings of an outcast, the deep despondency of an exile who has never known a home, and the wild freedom of a savage who never owned a master.

Did the Tziganes bring their music ready-made into Hungary, or did they find it there and merely adopt it? is a question which has occasioned much learned controversy. Liszt inclines to the former opinion, which would mean that no Hungarian music existed previous to the Tziganes' arrival in the country in the fifteenth century. That this music is essentially of an Asiatic character is, however, no positive proof in favour of this theory, for are not the Hungarians themselves an out-wandered Asiatic race? and what more natural than the supposition that one Asiatic race should be the best interpreter of the music of a kindred people? More likely, however, this music is an unconscious joint-production of the two, the Tzigane being the artist who has sounded the

depths of the Hungarian nature, and given expression to it.

I remember once asking a distinguished Polish lady—Princess C——, herself a notable musician and pupil of the great Chopin—whether she ever played Hungarian music? “No,” she answered, “I cannot play it; there is something in that music which I have not got—something wanting in me.”

What was here wanting I came to understand later, when I became familiar with Hungarian music as rendered by the Tzigane players. It was the training of several generations of gipsy life which was here wanting—a training which alone teaches the secret of deciphering those wild strains which seem borrowed from the voice of the tempest, or stolen from whispering reeds. In order to have played Hungarian music aright, she would have required to have slept on mountain-tops during a score of years, to have been bathed over and over again in falling dews, to have shared the food of eagles and squirrels, and have been on equally intimate terms with stags and snakes—conditions which unfortunately lie quite out of the reach of delicate Polish ladies!

Music was the only art within the Tzigane’s reach, for despite his vividness of imagination and the continual state of inspiration in which he may

be said to live, he could never have been a poet, painter, or sculptor to any eminent degree, because of the fitfulness of his nature, and of his incapacity to clothe his inspirations in a precise image, or reduce them to a given form. Every man has the impulse to manifest his feelings in some way or other, and music was the only way open to the Tzigane, as being the one solitary art which, *à la rigueur*, can dispense with a scientific training and be taught by instinct alone.

Devoid of printed notes, the Tzigane is not forced to divide his attention between a sheet of paper and his instrument, and there is consequently nothing to detract from the utter abandonment with which he absorbs himself in his playing. He seems to be sunk in an inner world of his own; the instrument sobs and moans in his hands, and is pressed tight against his heart as though it had grown and taken root there. This is the true moment of inspiration, to which he rarely gives way, and then only in the privacy of an intimate circle, never before a numerous and unsympathetic audience. Himself spellbound by the power of the tones he evokes, his head gradually sinking lower and lower over the instrument, the body bent forward in an attitude of rapt attention, and his ear seeming to hearken to far-off ghostly strains audible to himself alone, the untaught

Tzigane achieves a perfection of expression unattainable by mere professional training.

This power of identification with his music is the real secret of the Tzigane's influence over his audience. Inspired and carried away by his own strains, he must perforce carry his hearers with him as well; and the Hungarian listener throws himself heart and soul into this species of musical intoxication, which to him is the greatest delight on earth. There is a proverb which says, "The Hungarian only requires a gipsy fiddler and a glass of water in order to make him quite drunk;" and indeed intoxication is the only word fittingly to describe the state of exaltation into which I have seen a Hungarian audience thrown by a gipsy band.

Sometimes, under the combined influence of music and wine, the Tziganes become like creatures possessed; the wild cries and stamps of an equally excited audience only stimulate them to greater exertions. The whole atmosphere seems tossed by billows of passionate harmony; we seem to catch sight of the electric sparks of inspiration flying through the air. It is then that the Tzigane player gives forth everything that is secretly lurking within him—fierce anger, childish wailings, presumptuous exaltation, brooding melancholy, and passionate despair; and at such

moments, as a Hungarian writer has said, one could readily believe in his power of drawing down the angels from heaven into hell!

Listen how another Hungarian has here described the effect of their music :—

“How it rushes through the veins like electric fire! How it penetrates straight to the soul! In soft plaintive minor tones the *adagio* opens with a slow rhythmical movement: it is a sighing and longing of unsatisfied aspirations; a craving for undiscovered happiness; the lover’s yearning for the object of his affection; the expression of mourning for lost joys, for happy days gone for ever: then abruptly changing to a major key, the tones get faster and more agitated; and from the whirlpool of harmony the melody gradually detaches itself, alternately drowned in the foam of over-breaking waves, to reappear floating on the surface with undulating motion—collecting as it were fresh power for a renewed burst of fury. But quickly as the storm came it is gone again, and the music relapses into the melancholy yearnings of heretofore.”

These two extremes of fiercest passion and plaintive wailing characterise the nature of the Hungarian, of whom it is said that “weeping, the Hungarian makes merry.”

Under the influence of Tzigane music a Hun-

garian is capable of flinging about his money with the most reckless extravagance—fifty, a hundred, a thousand florins and more being often given for the performance of a single melody. Sometimes a gentleman will stick a large bank-note behind his ear, while the Tzigane proceeds to play his favourite tune, drawing nearer and nearer till he is almost touching; pouring the melody straight into the upturned ear of the enraptured auditor; dropping out the notes as though the music were some exquisitely flavoured liquid flattering the palate of this super-refined *gourmet*, who, with half-closed eyes expressive of perfect beatitude, entirely abandons himself to the delirious ecstasy.

Not only do the people at rustic gatherings dance to the strains of these brown Bohemians, but in no real Hungarian ball-room would other music be tolerated, and the Austrian military bands, so much prized elsewhere, are here at a discount and little appreciated.

Of course the gipsy bands in large towns are not composed of the ragged unkempt individuals who haunt the village pot-houses or the lonely *csardas*<sup>1</sup> on the *puszta*. Their constant intercourse with higher circles has given them a certain degree of polish, and they mostly appear in Hungarian cos-

<sup>1</sup> The solitary inns standing on the wide *pusztas* are called *csardas*, and have given their name to the national dance.

tume ; but intrinsically they are ever the same as their more vagabond brethren, and their eye never loses the semi-savage glitter reminding one of a half-tamed animal.



*Gipsy Musicians.*

The calling of musician has often become hereditary in certain families, who thus feel themselves to be interwoven with the fates of the nobility for whom they play ; and *vice versâ*, for the youth of both sexes in Hungary the recollection of every



pleasure they have enjoyed, the dawn of first love, and every alternation of hope, triumph, jealousy, or despair, is inextricably interwoven with the image of the Tzigane player. As Mr Patterson says: "The Tzigane is a sort of retainer of the Magyar, who cannot well live without him—the insolent good-nature of the one just fitting in with the simple-hearted servility of the other. Hence the Tzigane is most commonly found in those parts of the country where Hungarians and Roumanians are in the majority. He does not find the neighbourhood of the hard-working, money-loving Suabians profitable to him." Those who are successful musicians gain a sort of abnormal social status far above their fellows. The proverb, "No entertainment without the gipsies," is acted upon by peasant and prince alike. Those nobles who have squandered their fortunes would, if they took the trouble to analyse the causes of their ruin, find the Tzigane player to form one of the heaviest items. As to the peasant, there is a popular rhyme which says that if the Tzigane plays badly he gets his head broken with his own fiddle; but should he succeed in touching the feelings of the excitable peasant, the latter will give him the shirt off his own back.

English people are apt to misunderstand the position of these Tzigane musicians, which is in

every way a peculiar one—the intimacy with the upper classes thus brought about by their calling implying, however, no sort of equality. The Tzigane remains the gipsy fiddler, while the Magyar never forgets that he is a nobleman; and the barrier between the two classes is as absolute as that between Jew and gentleman in Poland. Although it is no uncommon sight in the streets of any Hungarian town, towards the small hours of the morning, to see distinguished members of the *jeunesse dorée* (their spirits, no doubt, slightly raised by wine) going home affectionately linked arm in arm with these brown fiddlers, yet no Hungarian could fall into the amusing mistake of an English nobleman, who, making a point of lionising all celebrities within reach, invited to dinner the first violin of a gipsy band starring in London some years ago. The flattering invitation occasioned the most intense surprise to the distinguished artist himself, who, though well used to many forms of enthusiasm called forth by his genius, was certainly not accustomed to be seriously taken in the sense of a civilised human being. It is said, however, that the gipsy's quickness of perception, doing duty for education on this occasion, enabled him to pass through the formidable ordeal of a London dinner-party without further breaches of our rigid etiquette than

are quite permissible on the part of a barbarous grandee.

It is said that the Tziganes often perform the office of *postillon d'amour* in taking letters, backwards and forwards between young people who have no other means of communication, their peculiar code of honour forbidding them to take any pecuniary remuneration in return. Thus many of them are able to show dainty pieces of handiwork and presents of valuable jewelled studs or amber mouthpieces, received from their high-born patrons in token of gratitude for delicate services rendered.

The words "Tzigane" and "musician" have become almost synonymous in Hungary, and to say "I shall call in the Tziganes," is equivalent to saying "I shall send for the musicians."

When the dancers are limp and indolent, the Tzigane musician loses interest as well, and plays carelessly and without spirit; but when he sees dancing *con amore*, and more especially if his playing be praised, then he knows neither hunger nor fatigue. He executes every sort of dance music with spirit, and his power of identifying himself with the dancers renders the gipsy's playing far superior to that of other professional musicians; but his real triumph is the *csardas*.

The bandmaster is fond of secretly selecting a couple from among the dancers, and at these direct-

ing his music—aiming it at them, if one may thus express it—following their every movement, and identifying himself with their every gesture. To watch a pair of lovers dancing is the gipsy player's greatest delight, and for them he exerts himself to the utmost, throwing his whole soul into the music, breathing the softest sighs and the most passionate rhapsodies of which his instrument is capable.

The Tzigane bandmaster—or rather, the first violin, for the gipsies require no one to beat time for them—when playing in the ball-room, is wont to change the melody as fancy prompts, merely giving warning to his colleagues by two sharp raps of the bow that a change is impending. The other musicians do not know beforehand what tune is coming, but a note or two suffices to put them on the scent, and they fall in so smoothly that the transition is scarcely detected.

Almost every one of the dancers has his or her favourite air—their *nota*, as it is here called—and it is meant as a delicate attention when the Tzigane bandmaster, smiling or winking at a passing dancer, strikes into his air of predilection. The gipsy's memory in thus retaining (and never confounding) the favourite airs of each separate person in a large society is marvellous; and not only this, but he will likewise remember to a nicety which air was your favourite one three or four years ago, and

all the attendant circumstances to which the former melody played accompaniment.

Thus, whirling past in the mazes of your favourite valse, with the girl you adore on your arm, you may catch the dark eye of the Tzigane player fixed expressively upon you, and in the next moment the music has changed: it is a long-forgotten melody they are playing now—a melody once familiar to your ears at a bygone time, when you had other thoughts, other hopes, another partner on your arm; when wood-violet, not patchouly, was perchance the scent you loved best, and fair ringlets had more charm than raven tresses.

For a moment the present scene has faded from your eyes, and in its place you see a vanished face, and hear a voice grown strange to your ears. That valse, once to you the most entrancing music on earth, now sounds like the gibings of some tormenting spirit, and you breathe an involuntary sigh for a time that is no more!

Thus the Tzigane player, unlike the hired musicians in other countries, has an intimate and artistic connection with his dancers. In England or Germany the musician is simply the machine which plays, no more to be regarded than a barrel-organ or a musical-box; in Hungary alone he is something more, his power of directing being here not limited to the feet, but may almost be said to ex-

tend to the fancies and feelings of his audience—feelings which it is his delight to share and sway, with actual power to stimulate love or jealousy, and reawaken grief and remorse, at the touch of his magic wand!

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

## GIPSY POETRY.

VERY little genuine Tzigane poetry has penetrated to the outer world, and many songs erroneously attributed to the gipsies (by Borrow amongst others) are proved to be adaptations of Spanish or Italian canzonettes picked up in the course of their wanderings, while of those few which are undoubtedly their own productions hardly any exceed the length of six or eight lines.

“We only sing when we are drunk,” was the answer given by an old gipsy to a collector of folk-songs, which pithy and concise definition of gipsy literature would seem to be a tolerably correct one,—though, on the other hand, it might be urged with some show of reason, that the gipsy being often drunk, we might naturally expect his poetical effusions to be proportionately numerous.

And perhaps they are in fact more numerous than is generally supposed, only that for lack of

a recording pen to take note of them as they arise, their momentary inspirations pass by unheeded, leaving no more mark behind than does the song of some wild forest bird when it has ceased to wake the woodland echoes. The conditions of the gipsy's life render all but impossible the task of a scribe, who has little chance of picking up anything of interest unless prepared for the time being to become almost a gipsy himself.

Nor have there been wanting ardent folk-lorists (if I may coin a word) who have gone this length: so, for instance, Dr Heinrich von Wlislocki, who, in the summer of 1883, spent several months as member of a wandering troop of tent gipsies in Transylvania and Southern Hungary, and has lately published a volume of gipsy fairy tales, the fruit of his laborious expedition. Yet on the whole the harvest is a meagre one, if we take account of the time and trouble spent on its realisation; and even this energetic collector has declared that he would hardly have the courage a second time to face the deceptions and fatigues of such an undertaking.

To his pen it is that we owe the first poem contained in this chapter; the second one, entitled "The Black Voda," interesting as being an almost solitary instance of a consecutive gipsy ballad, was communicated to me by the courtesy of Professor



Hugo von Meltzl of Klausenburg, another Transylvanian authority in the matter of folk-lore, who, in his 'Acta Comparationis Literarum Universum,' has given many interesting details bearing on these subjects.

The other sixteen specimens of the Tzigane muse are so simple as to call for no explanation, though in one or two cases not wholly devoid of poetical merit.

## GIPSY BALLAD.

*(From a German Translation by Dr H. von Wlislöcki.)*

O'er the meadow, o'er the wold,  
Tracks a boy the wand'rer old,  
Who a scarf wears by his side—  
Follows him with stealthy stride.  
Bleeding fells the wand'rer prone  
In the forest dark and lone;  
And the boy has ta'en the life  
Of the man with murd'rous knife.  
Throws the corse all stained with blood  
In the river's rushing flood;  
But, alas! not guessing he  
Who this ancient wand'rer be.  
Lightly running home then went,  
Till he reached his mother's tent,  
Held the scarf before her eyes;  
She, long silent with surprise,  
Cried at last with passion wild,  
"Cursed be thou, my only child!  
May the slayer of his sire  
Branded be by heaven's ire;  
Hast thy father killed to-day,  
And his scarf hast stolen away!"

THE BLACK VODA.<sup>1</sup>

" Rise, arise, my Velvet Georgie,<sup>2</sup>  
 Waken, set you to the bellows :  
 Forge and hammer nails of iron."  
 Said the husband : " I am coming ;  
 Take the broom the dust outsweeping."  
 And then Velvet Georgie rises,  
 Straightway on his feet is standing.  
 At the bellows quick down-sitting,  
 Nails of iron he is forging.  
 Then into the market going,  
 Roast-meat fresh and juicy bought he,  
 Roasted meat and white bread also.  
 And he walked into the tavern,  
 And he sat there eating, drinking,  
 Never thinking of his consort,  
 Nothing caring for her wishes,—  
 No new dress for her is buying.  
 She to Voda ran complaining.  
 Voda thus his love did answer :  
 " To the merchant quickly hie thee,  
 Ask him what a dress will cost thee."  
 To the town she ran off smiling,  
 Chose a dress there for her wearing.  
 Quoth the merchant : " Not on credit ;  
 Bring me cash before I sell it."  
 Voda paid him down the money ;  
 Paid and went—— But Velvet Georgie,

<sup>1</sup> This ballad, which in the original is called "Kalai Wodas," and begins thus :—

" T'ushtyi, t'ushtyi, Barshon Gyuri,  
 Thai besh take pre tri vina"—

is, with slight variations, sung all over Transylvania, often by the gipsy smiths, who mark the time on the anvil as they sing ; the dialogue between husband and wife, which forms the last part, being usually divided between two voices.

<sup>2</sup> Such names as "Velvet George," "Black Voda," &c., are very common among the gipsies, and have probably had their origin in some peculiarity of costume or complexion.

From the tavern soon returning,  
Found his wife, and in his anger  
Threw her in the glowing furnace,  
Whence she, loud with cries of anguish,  
Called upon her absent lover :

"Voda, Voda, O Black Voda,  
See how both my feet are burning !"

"Let them burn, O faithless lassie,  
Many pair of boots hast cost me."

"Voda, Voda, O Black Voda,  
See now how my waist is burning !"

"Let it burn, thou brazen hussy,  
Worn out hast thou many dresses."

"Voda, Voda, O Black Voda,  
How my bosom burns and scorches !"

"Let it burn, O shameless harlot,  
Many hands have oft caressed it."

"Voda, Voda, O Black Voda,  
Both my hands are burning sorely !"

"Let them burn, O wanton lassie,  
Many pair of gloves they cost me."

"Voda, Voda, O Black Voda,  
Now my neck is burning also !"

"Let it burn, thou brazen hussy,  
Many beads hast worn around it."

"Voda, Voda, O Black Voda,  
Now my lips the fire is catching !"

"Let them burn, O shameless harlot,  
Many kisses hast thou given."

"Voda, Voda, O Black Voda,  
Now my head itself is burning!"

"Let it burn, thou worthless baggage,  
Let the fire destroy thee wholly."

## GIPSY RHYMES.

## I.

The donkey is a lazy brute,  
That fact there is no hiding;  
Yet those, methinks, the beast doth suit  
Who slow are fond of riding.

## II.

Autumn glads the peasant's breast,  
Sends the hunter on the quest;  
Pines the gipsy's heart alone  
For the sunshine that is gone!

## III.

Since holds the tomb my mother dear,  
My life is cheerless, bleak, and drear;  
No sweetheart have on earth's wide face,  
So is the grave my better place.

## IV.

I my father never knew,  
Friend to me was never true,  
Dead the mother that I loved,  
Faithless has my sweetheart proved  
Still alone with me you fare,  
Faithful fiddle, everywhere!

## V.

Of coin my purse is bare,  
My heart is full of care;

Come here, my fiddle, 'tis for thee  
To banish care and poverty.

## VI.

Heaven grant the boon I pray ;  
All I ask is but a gown,—  
But a gown with buttons gay,—  
Buttons jingling joyously,  
Jingling to be heard in town !

## VII.

God of vengeance ! give to me  
That of wives the best ;  
Give me boot, and give me spur,  
Give me scarlet vest.  
Then though spite their visage darken  
In the market-place,  
Fain must look and needs must hearken  
All my foemen's race.

## VIII.

Where soft the wee burn babbles down over there,  
Full oft have I pressed these lips to my fair.  
The burn it still babbles, will babble amain,  
Shall lips to my fair be pressed never again !  
The waves of the brook to the valley are flowing,  
Where on grave of my fairest the blossoms are blowing.

## IX.

Down there in the meadow they're mowing,  
And looks at my sweetheart they're throwing ;  
Such looks at my sweetheart they're throwing,  
That mad is this heart of mine going !

## X.

Yonder strapping lass did bake,  
Put no salt into the cake ;  
Lo ! it sticks upon the pan—  
Eat it, child, as best you can.

## XI.

"Plainly, maiden, lov'st thou me?  
Which thy true love—I or he?"  
"Thou, O thou, when thou art nigh;  
But for love of him I die!"

## XII.

Boots and shoes were never mine,  
Seldom have I tasted wine;  
But I once possessed a wife,  
And she poisoned all my life!

## XIII.

Hammer the iron! Deal thy blows  
Heavy and hard, as a gipsy knows.  
Poor, yet ever—how poor!—remain;  
Heart full of bitterness, full of pain.  
Ah, how well would it be if there  
I could but in yon furnace glare,  
Till soft it grew, my love's heart ply;  
No man were then so rich as I.

## XIV.

Underneath the greenwood tree  
Days I've waited three times three;  
I would on my love set eyes,  
Here I know her pathway lies.  
Could I hope a kiss to earn,  
Into weeks the days might turn;  
Could I hope to win my dear,  
Then each day might be a year!

## XV.

Come, silvery moon, so silent and coy,  
What does my brown sweetheart that dwells by the mere?  
Say was she not kissed by a flaxen-haired boy?  
Or whispers a stranger soft words in her ear?

On second thoughts, better, moon, darling, be mute,  
The odious trade of a tell-tale eschewing;  
Or perhaps you might tell her—and that would not suit—  
What yesterday evening myself I was doing!

## XVI.

The bee ever makes for the flower,  
And lads after lassies will go;  
Was it otherwise, grandam so sour,  
In the days of thy youth long ago?

For Nature her mould never varies,  
To that can no wisdom say nay;  
What the ancestor felt, that the heir is,  
As inheritor, feeling to-day.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

## THE SZEKELS AND ARMENIANS.

OF the Hungarians in general, who constitute something less than the third part of the total popula-



*Szekler Peasant.*

tion of Transylvania, it is not my intention to speak in detail. Hungary and Hungarians have already been exhaustively described by abler pens, and I wish here to confine myself chiefly to such points as are distinctively characteristic of the land beyond the forest. Under this head, therefore, come the Szekels, as they

are named,—a branch of the Magyar race settled



in the east and north-east of Transylvania, and numbering about 180,000.

There are many versions to explain the origin of the Szekels, and some historians have supposed them to be unrelated to the great body of Magyars living at the other side of the mountains. They are fond of describing themselves as being descended from the Huns. Indeed one very old family of Transylvanian nobles makes, I believe, a boast of proceeding in line direct from the Scourge of God himself, and there are many popular songs afloat among the people making mention of a like belief, as the following:—

A noble Szekel born and bred,  
Full loftily I held my head;  
Great Attila my sire was he,  
As legacy he left to me

A dagger, battle-axe, and spear;  
A heart, to whom unknown is fear;  
A potent arm, which oft has slain  
The Tartar foe in field and plain.

The Scourge of Attila the bold  
Still hangs among us as of old;  
And when this lash we swing on high,  
Our enemies are forced to fly.

The Szekel proud then learn to know,  
And strive not to become his foe,  
For blood of Huns runs in him warm,  
And well he knows to wield his arm.

There is also a popular legend telling us how

Csaba, son of Attila, retreated eastwards with the wreck of his army, after the last bloody battle, in which he had been vanquished. His purpose was to rejoin the rest of his tribe in Asia, and with their help once more to return and conquer.

On the extreme frontier of Transylvania, however, he left behind him a portion of his army, to serve as watch-post, and be ready to support him on his return some day. Before parting, the two divisions of troops took solemn oath ever to assist each other in hour of need, even though they had to traverse the whole world for that purpose. Accordingly, hardly had Csaba reached the foot of the hills when the neighbouring tribes rose up against the forlorn Szekels; but the tree-tops rustling gently against each other, soon brought news of their distress to their brethren, who, hurrying back, put the enemy to flight.

After a year the same thing was repeated, but the stream ran murmuring of it to the river, the river carried the news to the sea, the sea shouted it onward to the warriors, and again quickly returning on their paces, they dispersed the foe.

Three years went by ere the Szekels were again hard pressed by their enemies. This time their countrymen were already so far away that only the wind could reach them in the distant east, but they came again, and a third time delivered their brethren.

The Szekels had now peace for many years ; the nut-kernels they had planted in the land beyond the forest had meanwhile sprouted and developed to mighty trees with spreading branches and massive trunks ; children had grown to be old men, and grandchildren to arms-bearing warriors ; and the provisionary watch-post had become a well-organised settlement. But once again the neighbours, envying the strangers' welfare, and having forgotten the assistance which always came to them in hour of need, rose up against them. Bravely the Szekels fought, but with such inferior numbers that they could not but perish ; they had no longer any hope of assistance, for their brethren were long since dead, and gone where no messenger could reach them.

But the star of the Szekels yet watched over them, and brought the tidings to another world.

The last battle was just being fought, and the defeat of the Szekels seemed imminent, when suddenly the tramp of hoofs and the clank of arms is heard, and from the starlit vault of heaven phantom legions are seen approaching.

No mortal army can resist an immortal one. The sacred oath has been kept ; once more the Szekel is saved, and silently as they came, the phantoms wend back their way to heaven.

Since that time the Szekel has obtained a firm

hold on the land, and enemies molest him no more ; but as often as on a clear starry night he gazes aloft on the glittering track<sup>1</sup> left of yore by the passage of the delivering army, he thinks gratefully of the past, and calls it by the name of the *badak utja* (the way of the legions).

Recent historians have, however, swept away these theories regarding the Szekels' origin, and explained it in different fashion. The most ancient records of the Magyars do not date further back than the sixth century after Christ, when they are mentioned as a semi-nomadic race living on the vast plains between the Caucasian and Ural mountains. A portion of them quitted these regions in the eighth and ninth centuries to seek a new home in the territory between the rivers Dnieper and Szereth. From here a small fraction of them, pressed hard by the Bulgarians, traversed the chain of Moldavian Carpathians, and found a refuge on the rich fertile plains of eastern Transylvania (895), where, living ever since cut off from their kinsfolk, they have formed a people by themselves. According to the most probable version, these fugitives would seem to have been the women, children, and old men, who, left unprotected at home in the absence of the fighting

<sup>1</sup> The Milky Way.

men of the horde, had thus escaped the vengeance of Simeon, King of Bulgaria.

“At the frontier” or “beyond” is the signification of the Hungarian word Szekel, which, therefore, does not imply a distinctive race, but merely those Hungarians who live beyond the forest—near the frontier, and cut off from the rest of their countrymen. One Hungarian authority tells us that the word Szekel, meaning frontier-keeper or watchman, was indiscriminately applied to all soldiers of whatever nationality who defended the frontier of the kingdom.

Later, when the greater body of Hungarians had established their authority over this portion of the territory as well, the two peoples fraternised with each other as kinsfolk, descended indeed from one common family-tree, but who had acquired certain dissimilarities in speech, manner, and costume, brought about by their separation; and despite sympathy and resemblance on most points, they have never quite merged into one nationality, and the Szekels have a proverb which says that there is the same difference between a Szekel and a Hungarian as there is between a man and his grandson—meaning that they themselves came in by a previous immigration.

The Szekels had this advantage over their kinsfolk in Hungary proper, of never at any time

having been reduced to the state of serfdom. They occupied the exceptional position of a peasant aristocracy, having, amongst other privileges, the right of hunting, also that of being exempted from infantry service and being enlisted as cavalry soldiers only; whereas the ordinary Hungarian peasant was up to 1785 attached to the soil under conditions only somewhat lighter than those oppressing the Russian serf. Curiously enough, though the system of villainage had already been formally discarded by King Sigismond in 1405, it was taken up again some years later; and in point of fact, up to 1848 there was scarcely any limit to the services which the Hungarian peasant was bound to render to his master.

Not so the Szekels, who have always jealously defended their privileges and preserved their freedom, owing to which their bearing is prouder, freer, nobler than that of their kinsfolk. The Hungarian peasant, as a rule, is neither wanting in grace nor dignity. But freedom is just as much a habit as slavery; and as one writer has aptly remarked, "A people does not fully regain the stamp of manhood and its own self-respect in a single generation," so the man who can count back eight centuries of freeborn ancestors will always have an advantage over one whose fathers were still born in bondage.

Like the other Magyars, the Szekels are an in-born nation of soldiers, and rank among the best of the Austrian army. It was principally on the Szekels that the brunt fell of resisting attacks from the many barbarous hordes always infesting the eastern frontier. When the Wallachians fled to the mountains at the approach of an enemy, and the Saxons ensconced themselves within their well-built fortresses, the Szekels advanced into the open plain and ranged themselves for battle, rarely abandoning the field till the ground was thickly strewn with their dead.

The Szekel, who has usually more children than his Hungarian brother, is well and strongly built, but rarely over middle size. His face is oval, the forehead flat, hands and feet rather small than large. With much natural intelligence, he cares little for art or science, and has but small comprehension of the beautiful. Even when living in easy circumstances, he does not care to surround himself with books like the Saxon, nor does he betray the latent taste for colour and design so strongly characterising the Roumanian. His inbred dignity seems to place him on a level with whoever he addresses. He is reserved in speech, with an almost Asiatic formality of manner, and it requires the stimulus of wine or music to rouse him to noisy merriment; but on occasions when

speech is required of him, he displays inborn power of oration, speaking easily and without embarrassment, finding vigorous expressions and appropriate images wherewith to clothe his meaning. The Hungarian language has no dialect, and each peasant speaks it as purely as a prince.

The Hungarian's character is a singularly simple and open one; he is simple in his love, his hatred, his anger, and revenge, and though he may sometimes be accused of brutality, deceit can never be laid to his charge, while flattery he does not even understand. It is his inherent dignity and self-respect which makes him thus open, scorning to appear otherwise than he really is. You will never see a Hungarian bargaining for his money with clamorous avidity like the Saxon, nor will he accept an alms with humble gratitude like the Roumanian.

He uncovers his head courteously to the master of his village, but he will not think of uncovering for a strange gentleman, even were it the greatest in the land. Hospitality is with him not a virtue but an instinct, and he cannot even comprehend the want of it in another.

A Hungarian who had stopped to rest the horses in a Saxon village came wonderingly to his master. "What strange people are these?" he said. "They were sitting round the table eating bread and



onions, and not one of them asked me to join them !”

On another occasion a gentleman travelling with an invalid wife was overtaken by a storm near a Saxon village, and wanted to put up there for the night. There was no inn in the place, and not one of the families would consent to receive them. “You had better drive on to the next village but one,” was the advice volunteered by one of the most good-natured Saxon householders. “Not to the next village, for there they are Saxons like us and will not take you in ; but to the village after that, which is Hungarian. They are always hospitable, and will give you a bed.”

The Szekel villages, of a formal simplicity, are as far removed from the Roumanian poverty as from Saxon opulence. The long double row of whitewashed houses, their narrow gable-ends all turned towards the road, have something camp-like in their appearance, and have been aptly compared to a line of snowy tents ready to be folded together at the approach of an enemy. The Magyar has a passion for whitewashing his dwelling-house, and several times a-year, at the fixed dates of particular festivals, he is careful to restore to his walls the snowy garment of their lost innocence. This custom of whitewashing at stated periods is still said to be prac-

tised among the tribes dwelling in the Caucasian regions.

In the midst of the village stands the church, whitewashed like the other houses. It is slender and modest in shape, neither surrounded by fortified walls like the Saxon churches, nor made glorious with colour like those of the Roumanians. Near to the entrance of the village is the churchyard, and in some places it is still customary to bury the dead with their faces turned towards the east.

There are few Roumanian villages in the Szekel land, neither do we find here the inevitable outgrowth of Roumanian hovels tacked on to each village as is usual in Saxon colonies. The Roumanians do not thrive alongside of their Szekel neighbours, because these do not require their aid and will take no trouble to learn their language. The Szekel cultivates his own soil without help from strangers, whereas the Saxon, whose ground is usually larger than he can manage himself, and obliged to take Roumanian farm-servants, is compelled to learn their language, and it has often been remarked that a whole Saxon household has been brought to speak Roumanian merely on account of one single Roumanian cow-wench.

The greater number of Szekels have remained Catholics, the population of the western district only having adopted the Reformed faith, while the

Unitarian sect, which has made of Klausenburg its principal seat, and counts some 54,000 members, is chiefly composed of Hungarians proper.

There are not above a dozen really wealthy Hungarian nobles in Transylvania, and of many a one it is jokingly said that his whole possessions consist of four horses, as many oxen, and a respectable amount of debts. The same sort of open-handed hospitality which has ruined so many Poles, has also here undermined many fortunes.

The conjugal relations are somewhat oriental among the lower classes, the position of the wife towards the husband involving a sense of social inferiority; for while she addresses him as *Kend* (your grace), and speaks of him as *Uram* (lord or master), he calls her thou, and speaks of her as *Felsegem* (my consort). In walking along the road it is her place to walk behind her lord and master; and at weddings men and women are usually separated, and if the house have but a single room it is reserved for the men to banquet in, while the women, as inferior creatures, are relegated to the cellar or to a stable or byre cleared for the purpose. Bride and bridegroom must eat nothing at this banquet, and only in the evening is a separate meal served up for them, and, like the other guests, the new-married couple must spend this day apart.

If we are to believe popular songs, of which the

following is a sample, the stick would seem to play no unimportant part in each Hungarian *ménage* :—

“ O peacock fair, O peacock bright,  
O peacock proud and high !  
I fool ! for though of lowly birth,  
A noble wife took I ;  
But nothing that I e’er could do  
Would please my peacock high.  
To market once I went and bought  
A pair of blood-red shoon.  
I placed my present on the bench,  
’Twas at the hour of noon.  
‘Thy duty bids thee call me lord,  
My darling wife,’ quoth I.  
‘Nay, nevermore, that will I not,  
And though I had to die,  
For gentlemen of noble birth  
Sat round my father’s board,  
And if I said not “ Sir ” to them,  
How should I call thee lord ?’

“ O peacock fair, O peacock bright,  
O peacock proud and high !  
I fool ! for though of lowly birth,  
A noble wife took I ;  
But nothing that I e’er could do  
Would please my peacock high.  
Again to market did I go  
And bought a kirtle fine ;  
’Twas growing dark as on the bench  
I laid this gift of mine.  
‘Thy duty bids thee call me lord,  
My darling wife,’ quoth I.  
‘Nay, nevermore, that will I not,  
And though I had to die,  
For gentlemen of noble birth  
Sat round my father’s board,  
And if I said not “ Sir ” to them,  
How should I call thee lord ?’

“O peacock fair, O peacock bright,  
O peacock proud and high !  
I fool ! for though of lowly birth,  
A noble wife took I ;  
But nothing that I e’er could do  
Would please my peacock high.  
The moon was shining in the skies  
When to the woods I sped ;  
I cut a hazel rod full long,  
And hid it ’neath the bed.  
‘Thy duty bids thee call me lord,  
My darling wife,’ quoth I.  
‘Nay, nevermore, that will I not,  
And though I had to die.’  
Then in my hand I took the rod  
And beat my bosom’s wife,  
Until she cried, ‘Thou art my lord !  
My lord for death and life !’”

The Armenians deserve something more than a passing notice at the fag-end of a chapter ; but having had little opportunity of being thrown together with these people, I am unable to furnish many details as to their life and manners.

Persecuted and oppressed in Moldavia during the seventeenth century, the Armenians were offered a refuge in Transylvania by the Prince Michael Apafi, and came hither about 1660, at first living dispersed all over the land, till in 1791 the Emperor Leopold granting them amongst other privileges the right to establish independent colonies, they founded the settlements of Szamos Ujvar (Armenopolis) and Elisabethstadt or Ebeschfalva. This latter town, which counts to-day about 2500 Armenian inhab-

itants, is renowned for the good looks of its women—pale dark-eyed beauties, with low foreheads and straight eyebrows, whose portraits might be taken in pen and ink only, without any help from the palette. They have the reputation—I know not with what reason—of being very immoral, but in a quiet unostentatious fashion.

In the men the pure Asiatic type is yet more clearly marked—the fine-shaped oval head, arched yet not hooked nose, black eyes, jetty beard, and clean-cut profiles betraying their nationality at the first glance. In manner they are singularly calm and self-possessed, never evincing emotion or excitement. They are much addicted to card-playing. In many parts of Hungary the Armenians have so completely amalgamated with the Magyars as to have forgotten their own language, but where they live together in compact colonies it is still kept up. There are two languages—the popular idiom and the written tongue, the language of science and literature. Their religion is the Catholic one, but their services are conducted in their own language instead of Latin.

Like the Hebrews, the Armenians have great natural aptitude for trade; and it is chiefly due to their influence that the Jews have not here succeeded in getting the reins of commerce into their

hands. The bankers and money-lenders in Transylvania are almost invariably Armenians.

A Saxon legend explains the origin of the Armenians by saying that when God had created all the different sorts of men, there remained over two little morsels of the clay of which he had respectively moulded the Jew and the gipsy ; so in order not to waste these, He kneaded them up together, and formed of them the Armenian.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

## FRONTIER REGIMENTS.

THE south-west of Transylvania used to form part of the territory called the *Militär-Grenze* (military frontier)—a peculiar institution now extinct, which, interesting as being to some extent of Roman origin, may here claim a few lines of notice.

When the Roman conquerors had taken possession of the countries north of the Danube, they found it necessary to organise a sort of standing rampart of troops to be always at hand, ready to oppose unexpected attacks from the barbarian hordes on the other side. These soldiers, who might be designated as military agriculturists, found their sustenance in cultivating the ground assigned to each of them, and, being always ready on the spot, could be speedily formed in line at the slightest alarm of an enemy.

Similar circumstances caused the Hungarian kings to imitate these institutions, and organise



the population of the southern frontier to that purpose, allotting to them the task of protecting the country against the frequent invasions of Turks. Not content, however, with resisting attacks from without, these troops often adopted an offensive line of action, making raids over the frontier to plunder, burn, and massacre in the enemy's country. The continual state of skirmishing warfare resulting from these arrangements kept up the martial spirit of the population, and many are the legends recorded of doughty deeds accomplished at that time.

After the fall of the Hungarian kingdom in 1526, the noblemen subscribed amongst themselves to keep up the frontier in the same fashion, often availing themselves of the assistance of these troops in their attempted insurrections against Austria.

But the Hungarian soldiers, who in this somewhat rough school of chivalry had acquired objectionable habits—such, for instance, as that of bringing back their enemies' heads attached to the saddle-bow whenever they returned from a skirmish—had, despite their evident utility, fallen into bad odour at Vienna; so when the Hungarian nobles themselves lost their independence, these frontier troops were suffered to fall into disorganisation. Only after Maria Theresa had ascended the throne, and, having consolidated the Austrian

power, obtained for herself and her descendants the irrevocable right to the Hungarian crown, was it thought necessary to reorganise in more regular fashion this living rampart along the frontier, with a view to keeping out the Turks, who were again showing signs of being troublesome. Accordingly, the population of the whole southern frontier, from Poland to the Adriatic, was classified in military companies and regiments, and the ground distributed to the peasants under condition that they and their children should live and die on the spot, their sons inheriting the obligation of serving in like manner as their fathers.

Of these frontier regiments, altogether fourteen in number, six were created in Transylvania. Of these, two infantry and one dragoon regiment were recruited from the Wallachian population; the remaining three, two infantry and one hussar, from the Hungarians.

This system was carried out without trouble in the provinces recently reconquered from the Turks, which, being thinly populated, offered greater inducements for fresh settlers; but elsewhere, where there already existed a fixed population of Hungarians and Roumanians, there was much difficulty in establishing it. In former days the peasants had consented to pass their life on horseback in order to protect the frontier; but those days were long

since gone by when people found such life to be congenial, and many of the novel conditions imposed by the Austrians were exceedingly distasteful. They did not care to be commanded by German officers, nor to feel themselves amalgamated with the Austrian regular troops, liable to be sent to fight on foreign territory.

Amongst the Wallachians whole villages emigrated in order to evade these new laws. Those who declined to serve, and were not inclined to leave their homes, were driven from their huts at the point of the bayonet, and replaced by other settlers brought from a distance. Much cruelty was resorted to in order to compel their obedience, the Austrians sparing neither fire nor sword to gain their ends; and the year 1784 in particular was most disastrous to those poor people, who after all were only trying to escape from unjustifiable tyranny. Also a few years later, when some of these troops had risen in insurrection, declaring themselves only obliged to defend the frontier, not to espouse foreign quarrels in which Austria alone had a personal interest, whole regiments were decimated, shot down by the cannon; and the place is still shown where the bodies of the victims of this wholesale butchery repose under two giant hillocks.

From an Austrian point of view, no doubt this

institution was a most excellent and practical one ; 80,000 trained men, who cost but little in time of peace, were ready at a moment's notice for war. Before the officer's dwelling-house at each station stood a high pole, wound over with ropes of straw and other combustible matter, which was set fire to at the slightest alarm of an enemy. The signal being thus taken up and repeated from station to station, the whole frontier was speedily marked out in a fiery line, and the men collected and in arms in an incredibly short space of time.

When serving against an enemy their pay was equal to that of the regular troops, while in time of peace they received no pay except a few kreutzers per day whenever a soldier was on duty—that is, whenever he had frontier inspection.

On these troops devolved the duty of keeping in order all roads, buildings, &c., within their circuit, and nowhere in Hungary and Transylvania were to be found such excellent well-kept roads, bridges, and buildings as those within the territory of the military frontier.

The men could not marry without permission of their superiors, their sons being, so to say, enrolled as soldiers before their birth ; while daughters could only inherit their share of the father's land on condition of marrying a soldier.

The lot of those born and bred in this species of

military bondage has been pathetically rendered in a Hungarian song, of which I offer a translation :—

“The wild wood was my native home,  
Though born unto a soldier's doom.  
Amid the green leaves sighing,  
And gentle cushats crying,  
My father nurtured me.

But soon as I, a stripling grown,  
Could sit a horse's back alone,  
I to the plough remaining,  
My sire must go campaigning  
Against the French afar.

Drive furrows deeper and more deep !  
Outbursting tears in torrents leap !  
My father ne'er returning,  
My mother pining, yearning,  
Soon wore her life away.

Now we to war to-morrow go ;  
The Ruler's word has bid it so.  
Ah me ! ye green leaves sighing,  
And gentle cushats crying,  
When shall I hear you more ?”

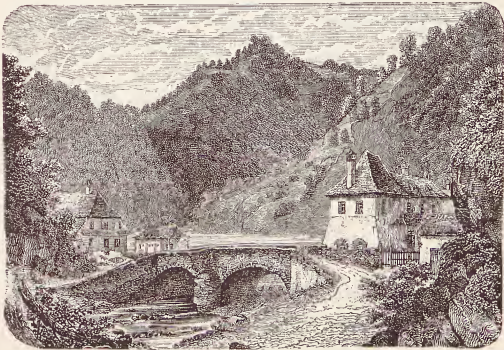
In former days when the country was in a state of semi-barbarism, this system answered well enough ; the military discipline was in itself an education, and the bribe of becoming landed proprietors induced many, no doubt, to accept the conditions involved. Later on, however, when all peasants obtained possession of the soil they tilled, the tables were turned, and the frontier soldier found himself to be considerably worse off than his

neighbour. Likewise the original reason of these institutions no longer existed; the Ottoman power was rapidly decreasing, and surprises at the frontier were no more to be looked for. The spirit, the adventure, the poetry of warfare (which alone had caused these people to accept their lot) had departed, and they could no longer be induced to let themselves be led to butchery in distant climes to gratify a stranger's whim. Therefore, in the reorganisation of the Austrian army after the disastrous campaign of 1866, these frontier regiments were, like other antiquated institutions, finally abolished, and have left no other trace behind but here and there a ruined watch-tower standing deserted in a mountain wilderness.

Many of the points selected for the erection of these military establishments lay amidst the wildest and most beautiful mountain scenery, and for a keen sportsman, or an ardent lover of nature, the lot of an Austrian officer in one of these beautiful wildernesses must have been a very El Dorado.

One of the most beautiful, and from a military point of view most important, of these military cordon stations was the Rothenthurm Pass (Pass of the Red Tower), so named from the colour of a fortress tower whose ruins may yet be seen beside the road.

This lovely mountain gorge, traversed by the river Aluta, and to be reached in a pleasant two hours' drive from Hermanstadt, has been the scene of much cruel strife in bygone days. Many a time have the wild devastation-bringing hordes poured into the land by this narrow defile ; and here it was



*The Rothenthurm Pass.*

that in 1493 George Hecht, the burgomaster of Hermanstadt, obtained a signal victory over the Turks, whom he butchered in wholesale fashion, dyeing the river ruddy red, it is said, with the blood of the slain.

Nowadays the river Aluta flows by peaceably

enough, and the primitive little inn which stands at the boundary of the two countries, offers an inviting retreat to any solitary angler who cares to study the characters of Transylvanian *versus* Roumanian trout.



## CHAPTER XL.

## WOLVES, BEARS, AND OTHER ANIMALS.

TRANSYLVANIA has often been nicknamed the Bärenland, and though bears and wolves do not exactly walk about the highroads in broad daylight, as unsophisticated travellers are apt to expect, yet they are common enough features in the landscape, and no one can be many weeks in the country without hearing them mentioned as familiarly as foxes or grouse are spoken of at home.

The number of bears shot in Transylvania in the course of the year 1885 was about sixty. Eight of these fell to the share of the Crown Prince Rudolf of Austria, who for the last few years has rented a *chasse* at Gyergyó Szent Imre, in one of the most favourable bear-hunting neighbourhoods.<sup>1</sup>

As to the wolves destroyed each year, they are

<sup>1</sup> Since writing this, Crown Prince Rudolf has terminated another successful bear-hunting expedition in Transylvania (November 1887), the booty on this occasion being a dozen head.

not to be reckoned by dozens, nor even by scores, but by hundreds, and I was assured by a competent authority that between six and seven hundred is the number of those who last year perished by the hand of man.

It is the commonest thing in the world on market days to see a group of shepherds in the iron-monger's shop (where a store of common firearms is kept), in deep consultation as to the merits of the pistol or revolver they are in want of for scaring the wolves so constantly molesting their flocks; and occasionally a snapping and snarling wolf, or a pair of bear cubs, are brought in a cart to the town in quest of an *amateur* of such fierce pets.

Even in the neighbourhood of Hermanstadt it is not safe to walk far into the country alone in very cold weather for fear of wolves, who can easily approach the town under cover of the forest, which runs unbroken up to the hills; and while I was at Hermanstadt, a large grey wolf was reported to have been seen several nights in succession prowling about within the actual precincts of the lower town.

At one of the toll-bars marking the limits of the town, and whence stretches off a lonely plain towards the south, a large fierce dog is kept chained up; but he never retains his situation two years running, because he is invariably destroyed

by wolves before the winter is out. "The dog at the Poplaka toll-bar has been eaten again," is the matter-of-fact announcement one hears every year when the cold is rising, and which has long since lost all flavour of sensation or novelty, and one only wonders how any Hermanstadt dog can still be found infatuated enough to undertake this forlorn-hope.

Up in the mountains, however, the wolves do not slink in stealthy groups of twos and threes, but assemble in such mighty packs that sometimes on the high pasturages the snow is found to be trampled down by the tread of many hundred feet, as though large droves of cattle had passed over the place. Officers who have been engaged in the work of going over the country, classifying all horses for purposes of national defence, have told me that in many out-of-the-way places up the hills they used to find the horses frequently bitten or scarred about the nose—as many keepsakes from the wolves, whose invariable habit it is first to spring at the horse's head.

Many are the ruses which the wolf employs in order to induce a horse or foal to detach itself from a drove of grazing animals. Sometimes he will roll himself up into a shapeless mass, and lie thus immovable for hours on the ground, till some young inexperienced colt, bitten with curiosity,

wanders from its mother's side to investigate the strange bundle it espies at a distance. The wily murderer lets himself be approached without moving, and only then, when the hapless victim bends down to snuff the packet, he springs at the throat, and makes of it an easy prey.

The more experienced horses have long since learned that their only safety is in numbers ; so at the approach of wolves they draw themselves together in a wheel, each head turned inwards touching the others, their tails all pointing outwards, and with their hind-hoofs dealing out such furious kicks as to enable them to keep at bay several enemies at a time.

The Transylvanian bears will rarely attack a man unless provoked, experiencing as much terror from a chance encounter as any they are likely to occasion. A Saxon peasant told me of such a meeting he had some years ago, when up in the mountains with some gentlemen who had come there in quest of deer. As they were to sleep in the open air, he had gone to collect firewood on the ground between a scattered group of fir-trees, when issuing from behind a tree-trunk he suddenly found himself face to face with a gigantic bear—not ten paces off. “We were both so taken aback,” he said, “that for nearly a minute we

stood staring at each other without moving. Then I called out, 'Der Teufel!' and took to my heels; and the bear, he just gave a grunt, which perhaps also meant 'Der Teufel' in his language, and he also turned to run, and when I looked back to see where he was, there, to be sure, he was still running down the hill as hard as ever he could go!"

Only a couple of summers ago two Hungarian gendarmes were patrolling near Szent Mihaly where each of them, walking at a different side of a deep ravine, could see, without being able to reach, his comrade. As one of them came round a point of rock, he was suddenly confronted by a bear carrying a sheep in his mouth. In this case, also, man and bear stared at each other for some seconds; then the bear turned away in order to carry off his booty to a safe place. The gendarme, recovering from his surprise, fired at the retreating bear, which, wounded, gave a loud roar. A second shot likewise took effect, for now the bear, dropping the sheep, raised himself on his hind-legs, and advanced on his assailant. By the time a third shot was fired, the bear had come up close and seized the muzzle of the gun. A fearful struggle now began between man and beast. The gendarme was holding on convulsively to his gun, when, his foot catching in a tree-root, he stumbled and fell to the ground. Already he saw the dreadful

jaws of the bear close to his face, and gave himself up for lost. However, the bear was getting weaker, and let go its hold on the gun to seize the leg of the man, who, with a last desperate effort, struck the animal on the breast with the butt-end of his rifle. This turned the scale, and the animal fled down the ravine to hide itself in the stream. In the meantime the second gendarme, who from the other side had been spectator of the scene, arrived, along with some shepherds, armed with clubs and pickaxes, and pursued the bear into his retreat. The animal received them with terrific roars, and began to pick up large stones, which he hurled at his adversaries with such correct aim as severely to wound one of the shepherds on the head. Finally the beast was killed, and his stomach discovered to be full of fresh ox-flesh. The wounded gendarme had to be conveyed home on horseback, and his gun was found to have been completely bent in the struggle.

At the costumed procession commemorating the arrival of the Saxons in Transylvania, which I have described in chap. v., the most conspicuous object in the group of hunting trophies was a gigantic stuffed bear, which, as a current newspaper announced, "had been shot expressly for the occasion." This paragraph excited considerable derision among non-Transylvanian sportsmen, who

mockingly inquired whether a bear could be killed to order like an ox or a prize pig.

In this case, however, the newspaper said no more than the simple truth, the bear in question having been literally shot to order by Oberlieutenant Berger, a native of the place, and one of the most noteworthy Nimrods in the land.

It happened, namely, that about a fortnight before the day fixed for the procession, some of the gentlemen charged with its arrangement were lamenting that the only bear they had for figuring in the hunting-group was of somewhat shabby dimensions; on hearing which, Oberlieutenant Berger volunteered to go into the mountains in quest of a better one. Chance favoured his expedition, for within forty-eight hours he met and shot the magnificent animal which had the honour of figuring in the historical pageant.

Besides the two fresh bullets which had caused its death, no less than eleven old lead balls were found completely grown into the flesh and muscles of the animal.

Two young bear-cubs captured alive by another sportsman earlier in the year, had originally been destined to join the procession as well as their dead relative; but proving too unruly, they had to be discarded from the programme, as it was feared that their roaring might alarm the horses.

Though stocked by nature with a profusion of every sort of game, such as roe-deer, stags, chamois, &c., &c., sportsmen generally find Transylvania to be an unsatisfactory country for hunting purposes. It is just sufficiently preserved in order to hamper an ardent sportsman who wishes, gun in hand, to roam unmolested about the hills; yet not enough protected to prevent the Roumanian peasants from calmly appropriating everything which happens to cross their path. They can hardly be called poachers either, because they are simply and utterly wanting in comprehension for this sort of personal property, and it would be as easy to persuade one of them that it is wrong to slake his thirst at a mountain-spring, as get him to believe that any of the animals he sees running wild in the forest can belong to any one man more than to another.

Even when regular hunting *battues* are organised, the Roumanians employed as beaters will not fail to put in a shot whenever they have the chance, nor will they hesitate to despoil your bag of half its booty whenever your back is turned.

In a large shooting-party in the neighbourhood of Hermanstadt two years ago, two roe-deer had been shot down at the first drive. More than one of the gentlemen had distinctly marked the place where the animals fell, yet on coming up to it no



trace of either was there to be seen save a little blood upon the grass, and the beaters who had first reached the spot loudly swore that the wounded animals had made their escape. All search was unavailing to discover where the carcasses had been hidden, and neither threat nor bribe could induce the peasants to disgorge the booty; but early next morning there were offered for sale at the Hermandstadt market-place two fine roe-deer, which, without rash judgment, may be safely asserted to be identical with those so mysteriously spirited away the day before.

On the occasion of this same shooting-party, some of the beaters had formed the further ingenious project of stealing the gun from one of the gentlemen as he lay asleep near the camp-fire; but they had reckoned without their host, not having counted on the exceptional contingency of there being one honest man among them, who took upon himself to put his masters on their guard. The other beaters, enraged at this treachery on the part of a comrade, revenged themselves by destroying the saddle and cutting out the tongue of his horse.

Chamois are sometimes to be seen in numbers of thirty to forty heads at once. Roe and stags are common, but the lynx and marten are growing

rare, while the ibex and urus have completely died out, the last urus known of in Transylvania having been killed near Udvarhely in 1775.

Small game, such as hares, partridges, &c., are rarely to be purchased in the market, and still more rarely to be met with in the stubble-fields. *Haselhühner*<sup>1</sup> and capercailzie are, however, sufficiently numerous in the pine-woods to reward more than a passing acquaintance; and whoever takes the trouble to approach the river Alt with anything resembling a civilised rod, may be sure of a basketful of well-flavoured trout.

The wildcat, badger, fox, otter, and marten are still plentiful, as well as almost every European variety of eagle and falcon. Vultures are likewise numerous; and a friend of ours who, to attract these birds of prey, lately invested in the unsavoury purchase of five dead dogs, which were deposited on a sandbank near the river, had presently the satisfaction of seeing nine well-grown vultures settle on the place.

Those same bear-cubs which had shown themselves so unworthy of figuring in the historical procession, were a great source of amusement to us. When they arrived they were tiny round

<sup>1</sup> The technical name of the *Haselhuhn* is *Tetrao bonasia*. They reside chiefly in pine-woods.

balls of fur yelping piteously for their mother, and hardly able to walk, but soon got reconciled to their position, and became most intimate with the soldiers at the barracks, where they were lodged. One day when we went to visit them in the barrack-yard, accompanied by several terriers, one of the cubs, happening to be in a playful mood, began making advances to the dogs, who mostly took to their heels in terror at sight of this formidable playmate. One white fox-terrier only stood his ground, and entered into the spirit of the thing, and in the wild game of gambols which ensued, the ponderous antics of the baby bear beside the lightning-like movements of the wiry terrier, as they chased each other round and round the barrack-yard, were a sight worth seeing.

Spite of their apparent awkwardness, however, it is wonderful to see with what alacrity these young bears could run up and down a tree-trunk, leading one to the uncomfortable conclusion that if pursued by one of their kinsfolk in a forest, the hope of saving one's self by climbing a tree would be a slender one.

These two cubs, who for some incomprehensible reason had been christened Dick and John, grew warmly attached to the officer who had brought them here, and would rush impetuously to meet him whenever he was seen approaching. Both of

them seemed likewise to be much attracted by the sight of scarlet, and whenever they espied a pair of red hussar breeches, or the scarlet stripe down a general's legging, there was instantly a race to this brilliant goal, not always relished by the object of these attentions, who sometimes failed to see the fun of being folded in their uncouth embrace.

Dick was apt to be sulky at times, and wont to misinterpret a friendly poke from a parasol, but John had an angelic disposition, and soon became the favourite. Dick had a bad habit of sucking his brother's ears, who used patiently to submit to the operation for an hour at a time, which course of treatment soon transformed his beautiful bushy ears into two limp fleshy flaps, devoid of the slightest appearance of hair.

They both very soon learned to know the soldiers' dinner-hour, and while the food was preparing used to push open the kitchen door in hopes of a share, till their importunities were baffled by an order to keep the kitchen locked in future. This much aggrieved the cubs, who stood outside thumping the door for admittance; and one day when the key had been merely turned and left sticking on the outside, Dick seized hold of it between his teeth, working it backwards and forwards with such persistency that he finally forced the lock, and marched triumphant into the kitchen.

Unfortunately the golden age of childish grace and innocence is but of short duration in the case of bears, and Dick and John proved no exception to this rule. After a very few months they began to grow large and gawky; the amount of butcher's meat required for their sustenance was something terrific, and Dick's temper was daily growing more precarious. Arrangements for their removal to more suitable quarters were therefore made, and finding their kennel empty one day, we received the mournful intelligence that the furry brothers had been transferred to the safer guardianship of a zoological establishment at Pesth.

## CHAPTER XLI.

## A ROUMANIAN VILLAGE.

IN our intercourse with the Roumanian peasantry we are constantly reminded of the fact that only yesterday they were a barbarous race with whom murder and plunder were everyday habits, and in whom the precepts of respect for life and property have yet to be instilled. Not that the Roumanian is by nature murderously inclined—on the contrary, he is gentle and harmless enough as a general rule, and in nine cases out of ten the idea of harming you will not even occur to him; but should your life by any chance happen to stand between him and the object of his desire, no sentiment of religion or morality will be likely to restrain him from using his knife as freely as he would in the case of a hare or roe-deer. It is not that he takes life for the pleasure of shedding blood, but simply that he sets little value on it, and that he regards as far greater sin any infrac-

tion of his Church laws than the most flagrant attack on life and property.

The study of this people, gradually emerging from barbarism into civilisation, is most curious and interesting. While eagerly grasping at the benefits held out to them by science, they are as yet unable to shake themselves clear of the cobwebs of paganism and superstition which often obscure their vision. It is the struggle between past and future, between darkness and light, between superstition and science ; and who can doubt that the result will be a brilliant one, and that a glorious resurrection awaits these spirits, so long enchained in bondage. But this hour has not yet struck, and the study of this people, however interesting, has its drawbacks, sometimes even perils ; and especially for a lady, it is not always advisable to trust herself alone and unarmed in one of the out-of-the-way Roumanian villages, as I had occasion myself to discover in one of my expeditions to a hamlet lying south-east of Hermanstadt.

Some time previously I had "spotted" this place on the map ; it seemed to be within easy walking distance—not more than two hours off—and, lying somewhat away from the highroad, was not likely to have been much visited, and might therefore be expected to possess a fair assortment of china jugs and embroidered towels.

"Take your revolver with you, mamma," suggested my youngest son, when I told him where I was going.

"Nonsense!" I replied; "the map and some sandwiches are all I shall require;"—for my experience, which till then had lain entirely in Saxon villages, had shown me no ground for such precautions. I do not suppose that the child's warning had been dictated by any prophetic spirit; more likely he wondered how any one lucky enough to possess such a delightful toy as a real revolver, could refuse themselves the pleasure of sporting it on every possible occasion. So leaving the neat little firearm hanging on its customary nail, I started on my walk, accompanied by a young German maid, who, speaking both Hungarian and Roumanian fluently, was useful as an interpreter.

It was early in October, and a bright sunshiny day: the highroad was crowded with carts and peasants coming to town, for it was market-day; but after we had struck into a path across the fields, the way lay solitary before us. The village, which nestled against a bare hillside, was neither very picturesque nor interesting-looking; and as we drew nearer I saw that it had a somewhat poverty-stricken aspect, which considerably depressed my hopes of ceramic treasures. I had not been aware that this hamlet, formerly a flourishing



Saxon settlement, had by degrees become flooded by the Roumanian element, and that the Protestant church, for lack of a congregation, was now usually shut up. Many of the people had German names, while speaking the Roumanian language and wearing the Roumanian dress; and of all the inhabitants, four families only still professed the Lutheran faith. Intermarriage with Roumanians, and the total extinction of many Saxon families, had been the causes which had thus metamorphosed the national character of the village.

Crossing a little bridge over the bed of a partially dried-up stream, we entered the hamlet, where I forthwith began operations, proceeding from house to house. At the very outset I found two pretty specimens of china jugs in a gipsy hovel, but this was a solitary instance of good-luck which had no sequel, for all the other huts could only produce coarse Roumanian ware, very much inferior to Saxon pottery.

Our appearance in the village made a considerable sensation, and at first we were slightly mobbed by all sorts of wild uncouth figures, mostly gipsies; but luckily by degrees the interest wore off, and we were left alone, but for one particularly villainous-looking man who kept following at a little distance. Already I had been rather provoked by several attempts to pick my pocket on

the part of the gipsies, so was on my guard, when, standing still to reflect where next to go, the villainous-looking individual approached to accost me, and I could see that his eyes were riveted on my gold watch-chain, which imprudently I had left visible outside my jacket. These suspicions were presently strengthened by his asking me what o'clock it was. "Look at your own church clock," I answered, rather shortly, pointing to the tower close at hand; but he gave a roguish grin, and said, "Our clock is slow; I wanted to set it right."

I could not help laughing, though I did not feel quite easy in my mind, and gave him the information he professed to want, but which of course was only an excuse to look at my watch. I now tried to shake him off, but my villainous friend was anxious to improve the acquaintance, and would not leave me without having ascertained who I was, and what I wanted here.

"Old china jugs!" he exclaimed, when somewhat weakly I had admitted my errand. "I have got plenty such jugs, if the gracious lady will only condescend to come into my house close by."

I looked again more narrowly at the face of my villainous friend, and the result of my investigations was to answer with great decision, "Thank you, I have got enough china jugs for to-day—*quite* enough."

He tried to insist, till I found it expedient to lose my temper, telling him to go about his business and leave me in peace. He did leave me in peace, but only indirectly, for we saw him soon after speaking to a gipsy woman, who presently began to dog our footsteps in the same manner, trying to induce me to go into this or that one of the more disreputable-looking houses.

By this time I was thoroughly tired out. Any one who has had like experience, will know how fatiguing it is to go into twenty or thirty houses in succession, with the invariable stereotyped questions, "Have you any jugs? and will you sell them?" and then to repeat over and over again the self-same process of persuasion and bargaining. Besides this, I had risen early, had a long walk, and was very hungry, so naturally wanted a quiet spot to sit down and eat my sandwiches. "There must surely be a village inn where we can get a glass of milk," I said, turning round to our persistent follower.

"There, there," said the woman, pointing in advance, and she disappeared running down the street.

We had no difficulty in finding the inn, as indicated by the usual sign all over Austria—a bunch of wood-shavings hung over the doorway. I was about to enter the room, when my German servant suddenly drew back and pulled my dress.

"Come away, come away, madam," she whispered; "it is not safe to go in there,"—and as soon as we had regained the road and shaken ourselves clear of some loungers outside who tried to persuade us to re-enter, she explained the cause of her terror: she had caught sight of that same man who had asked to see the watch, hiding behind the pot-house door, and evidently lying in wait for us.

This looked serious, and it was evident that some sort of trap was being laid for my unfortunate watch, so I resolved that nothing in the world should induce me to enter any such suspicious-looking house. My maid was nearly crying with fright by this time, and shaking like an aspen leaf, so I kindly advised her not to be a fool, pointing out that there was really no cause for alarm after all. "We need not enter any house unless we like, and they will hardly think of murdering us in the open street, so do not make a fuss about nothing."

"It is not for myself, but on account of the *gnädige Frau*, that I am frightened," the girl now explained, apparently stung by the insinuation of cowardice. "If anything should happen to you, madam, what will the master say to me when I go home alone? He will say it was all my fault!"

"Make your mind quite easy," I said (perhaps rather cruelly, as it now strikes me). "If they should cut my throat to get the watch, they will

for a certainty cut yours as well to prevent you telling tales of them, so you will never reach home to be scolded."

But the question of what to do was in truth becoming perplexing: rest and food were now secondary considerations, my only thought being how safely to reach home. The long lonely way that separated this village from the town seemed doubly long and desolate in anticipation, and I hardly liked to start from here alone. I now thought with regretful longing of the handy little revolver I had left at home in its Russian-leather case. Not that I should ever have required to use it, of course, but its appearance alone would have served as antidote to the dangerous fascinations of the gold watch. If I had but followed my boy's advice, I should not have found myself in this awkward predicament.

Taking a turn down the road to collect my ideas, a thought struck me. In the course of my peregrinations through the village earlier in the day, I had noted one house where the people appeared more respectable, though in nowise wealthier, than their neighbours. The man had a frank open face, in which I could hardly be mistaken; and moreover, I had observed a few books lying on a shelf, in itself an unusual circumstance in any Roumanian house, which would seem to imply some degree of culture. To this man, therefore, I resolved to go

for advice ; perhaps he would himself accompany us part of the way, or else provide some other escort who would undertake not to cut our throats between this and Hermanstadt.

This plan seemed reasonable ; but just as I was about to push open the gate of the little courtyard, the same gipsy woman who had been set on before to follow me came running up : " Don't go in there ; there is a terrible bad dog." She warned so earnestly, that for a moment I hesitated with my hand on the latch ; for if in the whole world there is a thing which has the power to make my flesh creep and my blood run cold, it is a savage dog, and this woman, with the quickness of her race, had already had occasion to note my weak point. Her warning, however, missed its effect, for having been in that courtyard before, I distinctly remembered the absence of any dog whatever, whether good, bad, or indifferent, and her anxiety to prevent me from entering was in itself a sign that there was no danger.

So in I went : the man with the good face was not at home, I was told,—he had gone to the field, but would presently return ; only his wife, a sweet-faced young woman, and his aged mother, being alone in the house. Yes, I might sit down and welcome, said the young woman ; and she hastened to bring me a chair and set some fresh milk before

me; so I passed half an hour very pleasantly in examining the cottage and its inhabitants.

The young wife was seated at her loom weaving one of the red and blue towels which adorn each Roumanian cottage. Some of the pillow-cases and towels here hung up were of superior make to those usually seen, being both softer in colour and richer in texture. "It is the old mother who made them," she explained. "She works far better than I can do, but now she is too old, and the weaving fatigues her; she was ninety-five this year."

"Was she in good health?" I asked by means of my interpreter.

"Quite good; but she cannot eat much—a little soup and a glass of wine every day is about all she takes."

"And where is your dog?" was my next inquiry, remembering the gipsy woman's caution.

"Dog?" she asked in surprise. "We never had a dog. What should we keep one for? We are too poor to be afraid of robbers."

When the husband came back I explained our errand. He smiled a little, and said he thought my fears were groundless. Those fellows would hardly dare to attempt any violence in daylight; but after all, it was just possible, he admitted. There certainly were several very bad characters

in the village, and no doubt a gold watch was a great temptation; it would certainly be wiser not to start from here alone. After considering a little (apparently it *did* require consideration), he said that he knew of one respectable man in the village, and would come with us to look for him. I expressed my astonishment at seeing so many books in his house. "I began by being schoolmaster in a neighbouring village," he told me, "but it was only for a short time. Then my father died, and I had to return here to look after the fields. That was ten years ago. If I had remained there longer I should know more than I do." He showed me a volume of general history he was then studying. "I read a little of it every evening when I come back from work. I try to keep myself from forgetting everything—one is apt to get rusty and *verbauert* (peasantified) living here among peasants."

The sole other respectable man which the village could produce turning out to be absent, our host expressed his willingness to accompany us as far as I wished, though I knew that he was leaving his work to do so. Before quitting the village, however, I had a last encounter with my villainous friend of heretofore, whom I found waiting for me near the little bridge. He begged me so urgently to come in just for one minute to look at his china jugs, which he described in enthusiastic terms,



that I gave an unwilling consent. He was apparently surprised and not over pleased on recognising my escort, and would have shaken him off on reaching his door, saying, "Well, good-bye, neighbour; you need not trouble yourself further."

Of course I refused to go into the house alone, and of course, too, when I did go in, the much-vaunted jugs turned out to be cracked and worthless specimens of the very commonest sort of ware, bearing no resemblance to what I was seeking.

I was fairly glad to turn my back on this horrid little village, fully resolved never again to set foot within its precincts; and in conversation with our obliging protector, who spoke very tolerable German (an unusual thing in any Roumanian), three quarters of an hour passed very quickly. He told me much about himself and his family; also about the village, which twice had been burned down within fifteen years and reduced to the most abject poverty,—everything of value in the place had perished on the one or other of these occasions. His family life seemed happy, but for one source of grief, for his marriage was childless, and to any Roumanian this is a very great grief indeed. "It is sad for us to be alone," he said; "but God has willed it so."

In the course of our talk he inquired, but with great delicacy, who I was, saying, "I do not know

whether I should say Madam or Fräulein; and perhaps I seem impolite if I am not giving the gracious lady her proper title." And when I had mentioned the name and position of my husband, I found him to be well informed as to all the military arrangements of the country, correctly naming offhand all the ten or twelve cavalry stations in Transylvania. He recognised our name as being a Polish one, and began to talk of that nation. "Those Poles have sometimes very good heads," he remarked, "but they do not seem able to manage their own affairs. What a pity they were not able to keep their country together!" After this he inquired much about the state of commerce and agriculture in Poland, the influence of the Jews, &c., &c., all he said indicating such a mixture of natural refinement and shrewd common-sense, that I was quite sorry when, arriving within sight of the highroad, and there being no reason further to tax his good-nature, he took his leave with a bow which would not have disgraced any gentleman.

## CHAPTER XLII.

## A GIPSY CAMP.

WALKING across the country one breezy November day, I was attracted by the sight of a gipsy tent pitched on a piece of waste land some hundred yards off my path—motive enough to cause me to change my direction and approach the little settlement; for these roving caravans have always had a peculiar fascination for me, and I rarely pass one by without nearer investigation.

This particular encampment turned out to be of the very poorest and most abject description: one miserable tent, riddled with holes, and patched with many-coloured rags, was propped up against a neighbouring bank. Alongside, a semi-starved donkey, laden with some tattered blankets and coverings, was standing immovable, and in the foreground a smoking camp-fire, over which was slung a battered kettle. There was very little fire and a great deal of smoke, which at first ob-

scured the view, and prevented me from understanding why it was that the gipsies, usually so quick to mark a stranger, gazed at me with indifference: not a hand was stretched forth to beg, nor a voice raised in supplication. The men were standing or reclining on the turf in listless attitudes, while the women, crowded round the fire, were swaying their bodies to and fro, as though in bodily pain.

Soon, however, the shining point of a bayonet descried through the curling smoke gave me the clue to this abnormal behaviour, and approaching nearer, I saw the figures of three Hungarian gendarmes dodging about between the ragged tent and the skeleton donkey: they were searching the camp, as they presently informed me, for a stolen purse. A peasant had had his pocket picked that morning at market, and as some of these gipsies had been seen in town, of course they must be guilty; and the speaker, with an oath, stuck his bayonet right into the depths of the little tent, bringing out to light a motley assortment of dirty rags, which he proceeded to turn over with scrutinising investigation.

Any person with a well-balanced mind would, I suppose, have rejoiced at this improving spectacle of stern justice chastising degraded vice; but I must confess that on this occasion my sympathies

were all the wrong way, and I could not refrain from wishing that these poor hunted mortals might elude their punishment, whether deserved or not. Justice, as represented by these well-fed boorish gendarmes, who were turning over so ruthlessly the contents of the little camp, holding up to light each sorry rag with such pitiless scorn, and stripping the clothes from the half-naked backs of the gipsies with such needless brutality, appeared in the light of malicious and unnecessary persecution; while vice, so poor, so wretched, so woe-begone, could surely inspire no harsher feeling than pity.

Among the females I remarked a young woman of about twenty-five, with splendid eyes, skin of mahogany brown, and straight-cut regular features like those of an Indian chieftainess. She wore a tattered scarlet cloak, and had on her breast a small baby as brown as herself, and naked, in spite of the sharp November air. One of the gendarmes approached her, and with a coarse gesture would have removed her cloak (apparently her sole upper garment) to search beneath for the missing purse; but with the air of an outraged empress she waved him off, and raising full upon him her large black eyes, she broke into a torrent of speech. I could not understand her language, but the tenor of her discourse was easy to guess at from her expressive gestures and play of features. Her voice

was of a rich contralto, as she poured forth what seemed to be the maledictions of an oppressed queen cursing a tyrant. Her gestures had an inbred majesty, and her attitude was that of an inspired Sibyl. I thought what a glorious tragic actress she would have made—perfect as Lady Macbeth, and divine as Azucena in the ‘*Trovatore*.’ Even the brutal gendarme felt her influence, for he did not attempt to molest her further, but half shamefacedly withdrew, as though conscious of defeat, transferring his attentions to one of the men, whom he vigorously poked with the butt-end of his gun to force him to rise from his recumbent position.

The fruitless search had now come to an end; the ragged tent had been demolished and the skeleton donkey unladen without so much as a single florin of the stolen money having come to light. In a prolonged discussion between gipsies and gendarmes, the word “Hinka, Hinka,” was often repeated; and Hinka, as it appeared, was the name of one of the gipsies who was at that moment missing from the camp. She was expected back by nightfall, they said.

Hearing this, the gendarmes proceeded to make themselves comfortable, awaiting Mrs or Miss Hinka’s return, lighting their pipes at the fire, and playfully upsetting the caldron containing the

gipsies' supper. One gendarme walked up and down with fixed bayonet to see that no one attempted to leave the camp.

There being nothing more to see, I took my leave, for it was getting late, and I had still a long walk before me. I had almost forgotten the little episode with the gipsies, when, near the town, I met a small linen-covered cart drawn by a ghastly-looking white horse, worthy companion of the skeleton donkey. I should probably not have given a second thought or glance to this cart, for it was nearly dark, but as it passed me two or three curly black heads peeped out from under the linen awning, and instantaneously as many semi-naked children had bounded indiarubber-like on to the road, surrounding me with clamorous begging. While I was giving them some coppers, I saw that in the cart was sitting a somewhat pale and jaded looking young woman, probably their mother, holding the reins and waiting for the children to get in. "Is your name Hinka?" I asked, as a thought struck me.

The woman stared at me in a bewildered manner without speaking, but her panic-struck face was answer sufficient.

"Do not go back to the camp to-night," I said, speaking on the impulse of the moment. "The gendarmes are there, and they are waiting for you."

My meaning was evidently plain though I had spoken in German; probably the word *gendarmes* had a familiar ring in her ear, for she now gazed at me with positive terror in her wild dilated eyes,—the terror of a hunted animal which sees the huntsmen closing in on all sides; then, without a word of explanation, excuse, or thanks, she abruptly turned round the horse's head, and lashing it to its utmost speed, disappeared in the opposite direction.

Several very worthy friends of mine have since pronounced my behaviour in this circumstance to have been highly reprehensible: I had sided with the malefactor, and possibly defeated the ends of justice by screening the culprit. Perhaps they are right, and it can only be owing to some vital defect in my moral constitution that I have never succeeded in feeling remorse for this action. On the contrary, it was with a feeling of peculiar satisfaction that I thought that evening of the three brutal *gendarmes* waiting in vain for the return of the guilty *Hinka*. I wondered how long they waited, and how many pipes they smoked, and to how many oaths they gave vent on finding that they had waited in vain, and their victim was not going to walk into the trap after all.





## CHAPTER XLIII.

## THE BRUCKENTHALS.

AMONG the crooked irregular houses, low-storeyed and unpretentious, which form the streets of Hermanstadt, there is one which stands out conspicuous from its neighbours, resembling as it does nothing else in the town. This is the Bruckenthal palace, a stately building which might right well be placed by the side of some of the most aristocratic residences at Vienna, and of which even the Grand Canal at Venice need not be ashamed—but here absolutely out of place and incongruous. Looking like a nobleman amid a group of simple burghers, everything about this building has an air thoroughly aristocratic and *grand seigneur*: the broad two-storeyed façade richly ornamented, the fantastically-wrought iron gratings over the lower windows, the double escutcheon hanging above the stately entrance, even the very garret-windows looking out of the high-pitched triple roof, have the appearance of old-fashioned picture-frames

which only want to be filled up with appropriate rococo figures.

As we step through the roomy *porte-cochère* into a spacious court, we glance round half expecting to see a swelling porter or gorgeously attired Suisse prepared to challenge our entrance, and instinc-



*The Bruckenthal Palace.*<sup>1</sup>

tively we fumble in our pocket for our card-case ; but no one appears, and all is silent as death. Passing over the grass-grown stones which pave the court, we step through a capacious archway into a second court as large as the first, and sur-

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from publication of the Transylvanian Carpathian Society.

rounded in the same manner by the building running round to form another quadrangle. Here apparently are the stables, as a stone-carved horse's head above a door at the farther end apprises us, and hither we direct our steps in hopes of finding some stable-boy or groom to guide us, and tell us to whom this vast silent palace belongs.

The stable-door is ajar, and we push it open, but pause in astonishment on the threshold, met by the stony stare of countless unseeing eyes. A stable it is undoubtedly, as testify the carved stone cribs and partitioned-off stalls—six stalls on the one side, six on the other, roomy and luxurious, fit only for the pampered stud of a monarch or of an English fox-hunter, but which now, deserted of its rightful occupants, has been usurped by a collection of plaster casts and terra-cotta copies of ancient statues. Where majestic Arabs used formerly to be stabled, now stands a naked simpering Venus, and the Dying Gladiator writhes on the flagstones once pawed by impatient hoofs.

By-and-by we come across some one, who in a few words gives us the history of the Bruckenthal palace.

Samuel Bruckenthal, of Saxon family, was raised alike to the rank of baron and to the position of governor of Transylvania by the Empress Maria Theresa, this being the first instance of a Saxon

being thus distinguished. In this capacity he governed the land for fourteen years, from 1773 to 1787, and much good is recorded of the manner in which he filled his office, and of the benefits he conferred on the land. Baron Samuel Bruckenthal was a special favourite of the great empress, who seems to have overpowered both him and his family with riches and favours of all kinds. Besides this splendid palace (truly magnificent for the country and the time when it was built), and which boasted of a picture-gallery and an exceedingly valuable library, the Bruckenthal family became possessed of extensive landed property, some of which was to belong to them unconditionally, other estates being granted to the family for a period of ninety-nine years, afterwards reverting to the Crown. Likewise villas and manufactories, summer and winter residences, gardens and hothouses, which have belonged to them, are to be met with in all directions.

Baron Bruckenthal, who died in 1803, had decreed in his last will, dated 1802, that the gallery and museum he had formed were to be thrown open for the benefit of his Saxon townsmen ; while his second heir, Baron Joseph Bruckenthal, further decreed, in a will dated 1867, that in the case of the male line of his family becoming extinct, the palace, inclusive of the picture-gallery,

library, &c., should revert to the Evangelical gymnasium at Hermanstadt, along with the interest of a capital of 36,000 florins, to be expended in keeping up the edifice and adding to the collection. The contingency thus provided for having come to pass a dozen years ago, the directors have appropriated different suites of apartments for various purposes of public utility and instruction. Thus the lofty vaulted stables were found to be conveniently adapted for containing the models for a school of design; while up-stairs the gilded ball-room has been converted into a cabinet of natural history. Here rows of stuffed birds, as well as double-headed lambs, eight-legged puppies, and other such interesting deformities, are ranged on shelves against the crumbling gilt mouldings which run round the room; and tattered remnants of the rich crimson damask once clothing the walls hang rustling against glass jars, in which are displayed the horrid coils of many loathsome reptiles preserved in spirits of wine. Truly a sad downfall for these sumptuous apartments, where high-born dames were wont to glide in stately minuets over the polished floor!

The picture-gallery, opened to the public on appointed days, contains above a thousand pictures, which, filling fifteen rooms, are divided off into the three schools to which they belong—viz., Italian,

Dutch, and German. The greater part of these pictures is said to have been purchased from French refugees at the time of the First Revolution, many families having then sought an asylum in Hungary and Transylvania.

Mr Boner, in his work on Transylvania, has thought fit to condemn in a wholesale manner the contents of this gallery as "wretched daubs fit only for a broker's stall,"—a verdict as rash as unjust, and which has since been refuted by the opinion of competent judges. Of course in a small provincial town like Hermanstadt, situated at the extreme east of the Austrian empire, it would be unreasonable to expect to find in a private gallery collected in the eighteenth century priceless *chefs-d'œuvres* of the kind we travel hundreds of miles to admire in the Louvre or at Dresden. No doubt, also, some of the paintings erroneously attributed to famous masters, such as Rubens or Titian, are but good copies of original works, while the parentage of a good number of others is unknown, or matter for guess-work. Granting all this, however, the wonder is rather, I think, to find such a very presentable collection of paintings of second and third rank in a small country town, amongst which no intelligent and straightforward connoisseur can fail to pass some hours without both pleasure and profit.

The best picture in the gallery, and the most celebrated, is the portrait of Charles I. of England, and of his wife, Henrietta Maria, by Vandyck, which has brought many Englishmen hither in hopes of purchasing it.

The library, now numbering about 40,000 volumes, is added to each year from part of the legacy attached to the Bruckenthal palace, and is a great boon to the town; for not only does it comprise a comfortable reading-room, to which any one may have gratuitous access, but all sorts of works are freely placed at the disposal of those who wish to study them at home, on condition of signing a voucher by which the party holds himself responsible for loss or damage to the work.

The Bruckenthal library is indeed a great and valuable resource to those banished to this remote corner of the globe, and it is only surprising that more people do not avail themselves of the advantages which permit one to enjoy at home, sometimes for two or three months at a time, several valuable works of history, biography, or science. Some of the editions of older classical authors are most beautifully bound and illustrated with fine copperplates—perfect *éditions de luxe*, such as one rarely sees nowadays.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It was to me a curious sensation in this out-of-the-way place to come across a copy of my great-grandfather's work, 'Gerard on

Many curious manuscripts, principally relating to the country, are also here to be found; but the gem of the collection, and by far its most interesting and precious object, is a prayer-book of the fifteenth century, which, written on finest vellum, contains 630 pages in small quarto, each page being adorned with some of the finest specimens of the illuminated art to be met with anywhere.

The collection of coins is exceedingly remarkable, containing, as it does, abundant specimens of the ancient Greek, Dacian, and Roman coins which are continually turning up in the soil, as well as of all the various branches of Transylvanian coinage in the middle ages. An assemblage of old Saxon ceramic objects, such as jugs and plates, may also be mentioned, as well as samples of old German embroidery, and some exceedingly beautiful pieces of jewellery belonging to the Saxon burgher and peasant costumes.

The least interesting part of the museum is what is called the African and Japanese Cabinet, hardly deserving such a pompous designation, as the objects it mostly contains (savage weapons, dried alligators, &c., &c., added to the collection some thirty years ago) are by no means more interesting

Taste,' translated into German. I had not been before aware of any such translation existing.



or varied than what one is so tired of beholding in any well-furnished English drawing-room.

There is a legend attached to the Bruckenthal palace which tells us how an old soldier, who had served his emperor faithfully through many years, took his dismissal at last, and, with only three coppers in his pocket, prepared to pilger homewards. On his way he was met by an old white-bearded man, who said, "Give me an alms, for all you have is mine." The soldier replied, "Your gain will not be great, for see, I have got but three kreutzers, but you are welcome to one of them." Hereupon the old man took one kreutzer, and the soldier proceeded on his way. Soon, however, he was met by another old man, who in like manner demanded an alms, and received a second copper; and this happened again a third time. But when the soldier had thus divested himself of his last coin, the third old man thus spoke: "See, I am one and the same as the two old men who begged from you before, and am no other than Christ the Lord. As, therefore, you have been charitable, and have given of the little you had, so will I reward you by granting any boon you choose to ask."

After the soldier had reflected for a little, he begged for a sack which should have the virtue that, whenever he spoke the words, "Pack yourself in the sack," man or beast should equally be obliged

to creep inside it. "I see," said the Lord, "that you are a wise man, and do not crave treasures and riches. The sack is yours."

With this magic sack on his back, the soldier wandered on till he reached the town of Hermanstadt. Here he found all the population talking of a ghost in the Bruckenthal palace, which had lately been disturbing the place, and whosoever attempted to pass the night in those rooms was found as a corpse next morning.

On hearing this, the veteran went with his sack to old Baron Bruckenthal, and begged for a night's lodging in those very rooms. In vain the old gentleman warned him of the danger, and prophesied that assuredly he would lose his life. The soldier persisted in his resolution, begging only for the loan of a Bible and two lighted candles. These were given to him, and likewise a copious supper, with wine and roast-meat. However, he ate and drank but sparingly, for he wished to remain wide awake and sober; but he opened the Bible between the two candles, and read diligently therein.

Shortly before midnight the room began to be unquiet, but the soldier did but read the Bible all the more fervently as the noise increased. Then as twelve o'clock struck there was a sound like the report of a gun, and a leg was seen suspended from the ceiling.

The soldier remained quietly sitting, and said to himself, "Where there is one leg, there must be another too," and verily a second leg became soon visible beside the first. Quoth the soldier then, "Where there are two legs, there must perforce be body and arms as well," and without much delay these also made their appearance. Then he spoke, "A body cannot be without a head," but hardly had he said the words when the entire figure fell down from the ceiling, and rushing at the soldier, began to strangle him.

Quickly he cried, "Pack yourself in the sack," and in the self-same instant the ghost was imprisoned, and plaintively begging to be let out again. The soldier at first only permitted the ghost to put out its head, which was quite grey, but it went on begging to be released, and promising to reveal a mighty secret.

Hearing this, the soldier opened the sack; but, hardly set free, the spectre again rushed at his throat, so that he had barely time to call out, "Pack yourself in the sack."

Now being again in his power, the ghost was forced to confess to the soldier that in these walls there were concealed many barrels containing treasures, and over these it was his mission to watch. It promised to make over in writing a portion of this money to the veteran, and for this

purpose begged to have its arms released from the sack in order to sign the document.

This being granted, the ghost a third time attempted the soldier's life, who, however, used the magic formula once more, and, determined to show no further mercy to his antagonist, cut off the head of the treacherous phantom.

Next morning the inhabitants of Hermanstadt were greatly astonished to find the soldier still alive, and the praise of his valour was in every mouth. Under his directions the walls were now broken open, and within many little barrels were discovered, all containing heavy gold, of which the brave soldier received a handsome portion, sufficient to enable him to live in comfort to the end of his days.

It is to this discovery that many impute the great riches of the Bruckenthal family, and were it not for the valiant soldier, the fortune they left behind them would hardly have been so great.

Though the name of Bruckenthal is probably but little known outside Transylvania, and I have failed to find it in several German Encyclopædias, yet here it is a word pregnant with meaning, and people at Hermanstadt are wont to swear by the Bruckenthal palace as the most stable and immutable object within their range of knowledge, just as an Egyptian might swear by the Pyramids

or the Sphinx. "May you be lucky as long as the Bruckenthal palace stands," or "Sooner may the Bruckenthal palace fall down than such and such an event come to pass," are phrases I have frequently had occasion to hear.

But the memories of the Bruckenthals are not confined to the palace which bears their name. Every vestige of past grandeur or remnant of an extinct luxury, each work of art which comes to light in or about Hermanstadt, may be traced back to this once omnipotent family. If, in your country walks, you come upon a double row of massive lime-trees, twelve or sixteen perhaps, standing forlorn on the grass, with nothing to explain their presence on a lonely meadow, you are surely informed that these are the last survivors of a stately avenue leading to spacious orangeries in the Bruckenthal time. The orangeries have now disappeared, yet these few old trees linger on with senseless persistency—their snowy blossoms reminding one of powdered heads, their circling branches suggesting wide-hooped skirts setting to each other in the evening breeze, like an ancient quadrille party forgotten in the ball-room, long after the other guests have departed.

If you find an old statue chipped and moss-grown, dreaming away in the shade of a rose-bush which soon will stifle it in thorny embrace, you

may take for granted that you are standing on the site of a former Bruckenthal garden.

If in a pawnbroker's shop you disinter a carved oak chair heavily wreathed in shrouding cobwebs, be sure that it has wandered hither from the old



*Baron Samuel Bruckenthal.*

palace on the Ring; and should you chance to espy a rococo mirror, with curiously fretted gold frame, but tarnished and blurred, do not doubt that at some remote period gallant beaux and

stately dames of the house of Bruckenthal have mirrored themselves complacently in its surface.

Look closer still in the miscellaneous heap of *bric-à-brac* which encumbers this same pawnbroker's back shop, and ten to one you will be able to recognise on some rotting canvas the grim features of old Samuel Bruckenthal himself, or those of his imperial mistress Maria Theresa.

Some of these old portraits, which I passed almost daily in my peregrinations about the town, seemed to look at me so plaintively with their canvas eyes, as though imploring me to release them from their ignoble position, that I had to take pity upon them at last and offer them an asylum in my house.

Few things ever gave me so vivid an impression of the transitory nature of earthly possessions, and the evanescence of power and grandeur, as these scattered relics of an extinct family meeting the eye at every turn; and as the sea of chance was continually casting up some of these shipwrecked treasures, more than one of them happened to drift my way. Thus one day a poor woman brought to my door a delicate little piece of fancy porcelain, which I was glad to purchase for a small sum. About ten inches high, it represents a miniature citron-tree with blossoms and fruit, growing in a gold-hooped tub of exactly the same shape as the

wooden cases in which real orange-trees are often planted. An old lady, who recollects the vanished days of the Bruckenthal glory, recognised this graceful trifle standing on my drawing-room *console*, and told me that she remembered a whole set of them, pomegranates and citron-trees alternately, with which the table used to be decked out on the occasion of large dinner-parties.

What has become of the many companions of my lonely citron-tree, I wonder? and where are now all the faces that used to meet round that festive board? *Tout passe, tout lasse, tout casse!*



## CHAPTER XLIV.

STILL-LIFE AT HERMANSTADT—A TRANSYLVANIAN  
CRANFORD.

LIFE at Hermanstadt always gave me the impression of living inside one of those exquisitely minute Dutch paintings of still-life, in which the anatomy of a lobster, or the veins on a vine-leaf, are rendered with microscopic fidelity, and where such insignificant objects as half-lemons or mouldy cheese-rinds are exalted to the rank of centre-pieces.

During seven months of the year—from April till November—the idyllic quiet of Hermanstadt was certainly not without its charms. So long as the forest was green and the birds were singing, one did not feel the want of other society, and the *répertoire* of walks and rides furnished variety sufficient for an active body and a contented mind. It has often been remarked of Transylvania, that while resembling no other country precisely, it

partakes of the character of many, and that within the space of half-a-dozen miles you may be reminded of as many different lands. Thus one day your road will take you through a little piece of Dutch scenery, a sluggish stream bordered by squat willow-trees, with at intervals a sprinkling of quaint old Flemish figures; another time it



*Street at Hermanstadt.*

savours perhaps of Rhineland, as your path, leading upwards to the top of a sandy hill, loses itself in a labyrinth of luxuriant vineyards; or else you may deem yourself on the Roman Campagna, when, issuing forth on the vast tracks of waste

land, you see shaggy buffaloes standing about in attitudes of lazy enjoyment, leisurely cropping the sun-burnt grass or voluptuously steeping their bodies in the cooling bath of a green shining morass.

You may ride for hours in the shade of gnarled oak-trees, or, emerging on to an open glade, indulge in a long stretched gallop over the velvety sward. In spring-time these grassy stretches are crowded thick with scented violets, whose purple heads are crushed by dozens at each stride of your horse; and in autumn, when the grass is close cropped, these meadows become one vast playing-ground for legions of brown field-mice, scampering away from under the horse's feet, or peeping at us with beady black eyes from out the porticoes of their sheltering holes.

But once the winter has fairly set in, when those same frisky brown mice have retired to their strongholds in the bowels of the earth; when the last flower has withered on its stalk, and birds of passage have left the land; when streams have ceased babbling, and mill-wheels, made captive by chains of glittering icicles, are forced to stand still; when parasols have been exchanged for muffs, and the new toll-dog has already been eaten by the wolf,—then indeed a season of desperate desolation settled down on the place. What is usually un-

derstood by the word amusement did not here exist. There is a theatre, it is true, but this is available in summer only; for as the crazy old tower which has been turned into a temple of the muses cannot be heated, it remains closed till the return of spring brings with the swallows some theatrical company of third or fourth class, to delight the population during a space of some weeks. Now and then a shabby menagerie or still shabbier circus finds its way to the place; and such minor attractions as an educated seal, a fat lady, or a family of intelligent fleas, offer themselves for the delectation of a distinguished public. I have known persons who paid as many as six visits to the seal and eight to the fat lady during this period of vital stagnation. Is not this bare statement wellnigh pathetic in its dreary suggestiveness? What stronger proof can there be of the mournful state of an intellect reduced to seek comfort from seals or fat women?

Had it not been for the resources of the Bruckenthal library, life would have hardly been endurable at this *saison morte*; but after all, even reading has limits, and the question of what next to do was apt to become puzzling to unfortunate mortals whose tastes did not happen to lie in the directions of music, love, or cookery.

About the liveliest thing to be done was to go

often to the *place* on market-days, and watch the endless succession of pictures always to be found there. It is the sort of market-place which would be a perfect god-send to any artist in search of models for his studio. No difficulty here in collecting types of every sort: an amazing display of pretty dark-eyed women in rich oriental costumes; a still greater assortment of shaggy frowning figures armed with dagger and pistol, representing every possible gradation of the Italian bandit or the medieval bravo. Here a sweet-faced young Roumanian woman, tenderly pressing a naked sucking-pig to her breast, might sit for a portrait of the Madonna; there a Saxon matron, prim and puritanical in her stiff old-fashioned dress, is offering cider for sale in a harsh metallic voice; yonder a row of old dames, who sit weaving funeral wreaths out of berries and evergreens, would offer famous models for the Parques, or the *Tricoteuses* under the guillotine (it was just about here, by the way, that the scaffold used to stand in olden times). Dishevelled gipsy women are trying to dispose of coarse wooden spoons, or baskets made out of shavings, no doubt combining their trade with a little profitable pocket-picking; and half-naked gipsy children are searching the mire for scraps of bread or vegetables which no well-bred dog would condescend to regard.

There is no great choice of delicacies to be found at this Hermanstadt market-place. Game is but rare, for reasons that I have mentioned before, and the finer sorts of vegetables are entirely wanting. The beef, veal, pork, and mutton which form the whole *répertoire* of the butcher's stall, cannot be compared to English meat, but have the great advantage of being much cheaper—beef about 4d. and mutton 3d. per lb. Eggs and butter are good and plentiful; and as for the milk, let no one pretend to have tasted milk till he has been in Transylvania—so thick, so rich, so exquisitely flavoured is the milk of those repulsive-looking and ferocious buffaloes, as good almost as cream elsewhere, and for the rest of your life putting you out of conceit of your vaunted Alderney or short-horn breeds, and making everything else taste like skim-milk by comparison. Some people indeed there are, of super-delicate digestions, who cannot stand buffaloes' milk, and are deterred by the delicate almond flavour usually considered to be its greatest attraction.

The Transylvanian wines have been described and extolled by other authors (Liebig, for instance), and deserve to be yet more widely known. There are, of course, many different sorts and gradations, those from the Kokel valley being the most highly prized. It is mostly white, and even the

common *vin du pays* is distinguished by its rich amber hue, making one think of liquid topazes, if ever topazes could be melted down and sold at sixpence the gallon.

It is a noticeable and praiseworthy fact that at Hermanstadt there are no beggars. It is the pride of the Saxons to be absolutely without proletariat of the kind which seems as necessary an ingredient of other town populations as rats and mice. Even the Roumanians, though poor, are not addicted to begging, and excepting the gipsies, I do not recollect one single instance of meeting a beggar in or about the town. Nor can the gipsies be called beggars by profession ; no gipsy will in cold blood set himself to go begging from door to door, though he instinctively holds out his hand to any one who passes his tent.

Curious old legends occur to us while picking our way about the streets, and more than one old house is pointed out as being inhabited by ghosts. Also, Dr Faust, of famous memory, is said to have long resided at Hermanstadt, and of him a very old woman, who died not long ago, used to relate as follows :—

“ My grandfather was serving as apprentice at the time when Dr Faust lived here, and told me many tales of the wonderful things the great doctor used to do. Thus one day he played at

bowls on the big Ring (*place*) with large round stones, which as they rolled were changed into human heads, and became stones again as soon as they stood still. Another time he assumed the shape of the town parson, and as such walked up and down the church roof, finally standing on his head at the top of the steeple, to the terror and amazement of the people below; then when the real parson made his appearance on the Ring, he jumped down amongst the crowd in guise of a large black cat with fiery eyes, which forthwith disappeared.

“Once, also, on occasion of a large cattle-fair, there was suddenly heard the sound of military music, and, lo and behold! in place of the sheep, calves, oxen, and horses, there marched past a regiment of soldiers with flying colours and resounding music. The people rubbed their eyes, scarce believing what they saw and heard; then as still they stared and gaped, the bandmaster gave a signal, the music turned to a hundredfold bleating and bellowing, and the sheep, cattle, and horses stood there as before.

“At last, as every one knows, Dr Faust was carried off to hell. Our Lord would gladly have saved him from this doom, for the Doctor had always a kind heart, and had done much good to the poor; but to save him was impossible, for he



had sold himself by contract to the devil, who kept strict watch over him, and never let him out of sight."

Also as architect Dr Faust was renowned throughout Transylvania, but he often played tricks on the people, who grew to distrust him and decline his services. The numerous Roman roads still to be met with all over the country are attributed to Dr Faust, who, it is said, constructed them with the assistance of the Evil One.

The shops at Hermanstadt are such as might be expected from its geographical position and the sort of people inhabiting it; in fact, you are agreeably surprised to find here fashions no more ancient than of two years' date. Shopkeepers here still retain the antediluvian habit of eating their dinner as we hear of them doing some hundred years ago. When twelve o'clock strikes every shop is closed, and you would knock in vain against any of the barred-up doors; the streets become suddenly empty, and a stranger arriving at that hour would be prone to imagine himself to have stepped into a sleeping city. There are two fairly good German booksellers, several photographers, and sufficient choice of most other things to satisfy all reasonable wants. Yet there were people among our acquaintances who, scarcely more reasonable than children crying for the moon, used to fly into

a passion, and consider themselves ill-used, because they had failed to procure some fashionable kind of notepaper, or the newest thing out in studs.

Sometimes, it is true, the narrow circle of Hermanstadt traffic showed its threadbare surface in the most amusing manner, as, for instance, when in an evil hour I bethought myself of ordering a winter jacket trimmed with otter-skin fur. Three skins would suffice for my purpose, as the tailor had calculated ; so, accordingly, I went the round of all the fur-selling shops in the place. There were four of these who kept fur amongst other goods, and by a curious coincidence, each of them confessed to possessing one otter only. Three out of the four could not show me their skin ; they were unable to lay hand on it at that precise moment, it seemed, but if I would step round later in the day it should be produced. Returning, therefore, some hours later, I found, indeed, the promised otter in shop No. 2, but Nos. 3 and 4 were, for some mysterious reason, unable to keep their word, putting me off again to the following day ; and by a strange accident, the otter in shop No. 1 had now disappeared. Then ensued a wild-geese chase—or, I suppose, I should call it a wild-otter hunt—all round the shops again for several days, having glimpses of an otter now at one shop, now at another, but never by any chance in two shops simultaneously, till at

last an energetic summons on my part to confront all four together, led to the melancholy revelation that there existed but one single otter in the whole town of Hermanstadt, the poor hard-worked animal alternately figuring among the goods of four different tradesmen.

In olden times, as we are told, the furrier guild of Hermanstadt was very illustrious. Its members once specially distinguished themselves in a fray with the Turks by delivering their Comes, in danger of being cut down. Since that time the guild enjoyed the distinction of executing the sword-dance on solemn occasions, particularly at the installation of each new Comes.

This anecdote occurred to my mind more than once in the course of my otter hunt; and I sadly reflected that the Comes would probably be left to perish to-day, while the sword-dance would be apt to assume somewhat shabby proportions if executed by the four greasy Jews, with their solitary otter, which is all that remains of the once famous guild.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Not only the furriers but many other guilds flourished here in a remarkable degree, the goldsmiths in particular taking rank along with Venetian and Genoese artists of the same period. After the middle of last century, the guilds began to fall into decadence; and finally, when the old restrictions on trade were abolished in 1860, they began to disappear. Yet the guild system, in all its essentials, was here kept up much longer than in any part of Germany; and

Other provincial towns as small as or smaller than Hermanstadt can always show a certain amount of resident families whose hospitable houses are thrown open to strangers living there for a time. Here there is nothing of the sort, the wealthier class being entirely made up of Saxon burghers, who have no notions of friendly intercourse with strangers. It is difficult to explain the reason of this ungracious reserve, for they are neither wanting in intelligence nor in learning. Their education is unquestionably superior to that of Poles or Hungarians of the same class of life; but even when well-informed in all branches of science, music, and literature, and on the most intimate terms with Goethe and Schiller, Mozart and Beethoven, they can rarely be classed as gentlefolk, from their total lack of outward polish and utter incomprehension of the commonest rules of social intercourse. Even persons occupying the very highest positions in Church and State are constantly giving offence by glaring breaches of everyday etiquette. This proceeds no doubt from ignorance, from want

even long after it had nominally exploded, many little customs relating to the guilds were still retained—as, for instance, that of all members sitting together in church, each corporation having its arms painted up above the seats. It is only within the last twenty years that this custom has fallen into disuse, for Mr Boner, writing in 1865, makes mention of it as still extant. Also to this day, in several of the Saxon towns, it is quite usual to see signboards bearing such inscriptions as “lodging-house for joiners,” tailors, &c.

of natural tact, rather than from any intentional desire to slight; but the result is unquestionably that strangers, who might certainly derive much advantage from intercourse with some of these people, are deterred from the attempt by the lack of encouragement with which they are met.

I should, however, be ungrateful were I not to acknowledge that among the Transylvanian Saxons I learned to know several, to whose acquaintance I shall always look back as a pleasant reminiscence. First and foremost among these I should like to mention our worthy physician Dr Pildner von Steinburg, to whom I am indebted for many interesting details of Saxon folk-lore. Also more than one of the school professors and several village pastors I can count among the people I am glad to have known, and I am as truly convinced that I might have extended my acquaintance with pleasure and profit considerable had circumstances so permitted. But precisely therein lies the difficulty. The Transylvanian Saxon burgher is a very hard nut indeed to crack, and in order to get at the sound kernel within, one has to encounter such a very tough outside that few people care to attempt it. No doubt much of the imposed code of etiquette of the civilised world is an empty sham which lofty spirits should be able to dispense with; but we are so unfortunately narrow-minded that we cannot

entirely divest ourselves of the prejudices in which we were brought up.

In other parts of Transylvania, the country seats of the Hungarian nobility offer a pleasant diversion; but here there is nothing of the sort, all the land about the place being in the hands of Saxon village communities. Social life at Hermanstadt was therefore reduced to a few military families, who either might or might not happen to suit each other; and whoever has experience with this class will know that the cases of non-suitability are, alas! by far the most frequent.

"Small towns are so much nicer—don't you think so?" I heard a gushing creature remark to a gentleman she was endeavouring to captivate. "One gets to know people so much better than in large towns. Isn't it true?" "Very true," he replied, drily; "one gets to know—and to dislike each other so much more thoroughly than in a large town."

Of course there were exceptions; but even if you do succeed in finding one or two friends whose society you care to cultivate, the case is not really much better—for whose feelings, what affection could stand the test of meeting their best friend six times a-day in every possible combination of weather, locality, and costume?—in church, on the promenade, at the confectioner's, and in every

second shop, till you have long exhausted your whole *répertoire* of smiles, nods, and ejaculatory salutations. What galvanised attempts were made at gaiety only served to bring out the social barrenness into stronger relief; for how was it possible to get up interest in a ball when you knew exactly beforehand what every woman would wear, what each man would say, and which of them would dance together?

None of the military families then stationed at Hermanstadt happening to have grown-up daughters, the absence of girls from most social reunions gave them much of the effect of a third-class provincial theatre, where the part of *soubrette* is performed by a respectable matron of fifty, and where Juliets and Ophelias are apt to be *passée* and wrinkled. We hear so much about the corruption of large towns; but for a good, steady, infallible underminer of morals, commend me to the life of a dull little country town. People here began to flirt out of very *ennui* and desolation of spirit; beardless boys at a loss to dispose of their soft green hearts, desperately offered them to women twice their age; couples who had lived happily together in the whirl of a dissipated capital, now drifted asunder, under the deadening influence of this idyllic *tête-à-tête*, each seeking distraction in another direction—the result of all this being an

amount of middle-aged flirtation exceedingly nauseous to behold. Each evening-party was thus broken up into duets of these elderly lovers, while by daytime every man walked with his neighbour's wife beneath the bare elm-trees which shaded the only dry walk near the town.

This is perhaps what Balzac means by saying that life in the provinces is far more intense than in a capital—so intense indeed as frequently to be entirely made up of unnatural dislikes and equally unnatural likings; while that serene indifference which after all is the only really comfortable feeling in life, has here no place.

Cranford-like, we all walked to and from the social meetings which took place at alternate houses. The distances were so short as not to make it worth while getting in and out of a carriage, and no one who loved their horses cared to drive them on a cold dark night over the slippery and uneven pavement of the town. Every party therefore terminated by a Cinderella-like transformation scene—thick wadded hoods, heavy fur cloaks, and monstrous clogs reducing us one and all to shapeless bundles, as we walked home in the starlight over the crisp crunching snow.

As the winter advances, the social gloom deepens, and the liveliest spirits fall a prey to a sense of mild desperation. I began to realise the possibility of



paying endless visits to the seal or the fat lady, and only wondered why no one had as yet hit upon the bright expedient of buying the one or marrying the other, merely by way of bringing some variety into his existence. Some women changed their cooks, and others their lovers, merely for change's sake; and as there was far greater choice of the latter than of the former article—there being many men, but of cooks very few—any woman known to be capable of roasting a hen or making a plain rice-pudding became the centre of a dozen intrigues woven round her greasy person. A single roe-deer appearing in the market infallibly gave birth to three or four evening-parties within the week. You were invited to sup on its saddle at the General's, to partake of the right haunch at the Colonel's house and the left at the Major's, and might deem yourself exceptionally lucky indeed if not further compelled to study its anatomy at some other house or houses—everywhere accompanied by the identical brown sauce, the same slices of lemon, the self-same dresses, cards, and conversation!

O roe-buck, roe-buck! why did you not remain in your own native forest? Much better would it have been for yourself—and for us!

## CHAPTER XLV.

## FIRE AND BLOOD—THE HERMANSTADT MURDER.

AT risk of dispelling the idea just given of the somnolent nature of life at Hermanstadt, I am bound to mention that the quiet little town was once distinguished by a murder, as repulsive and cold-blooded as any of which our most corrupted capitals can boast.

It came to pass, namely, that during the summer of 1883 the town was several times roused by the fire-alarm, and at short intervals more than one barn or stable was partially reduced to ashes. Nobody thought much of this at the time, for, thanks to the energetic conduct of the volunteer fire-brigade, assistance was promptly rendered, and though some few Saxon voices were heard to express a belief that their beloved compatriots the Roumanians were probably at the bottom of this, as of most other unexplained pieces of mischief, the majority of people were of opinion that the unusually dry summer,

coupled with some chance acts of negligence, was quite sufficient to account for these conflagrations.

In the month of September, however, the entire garrison of Hermanstadt being absent at the military manœuvres, these fires began to assume an epidemic character, and by a strange coincidence they occurred invariably at night. During the week the troops were away there were no less than four or five fires.

Vague alarm now began to take possession of the population, and the uneasy feeling that something was wrong took shape in a dozen fantastic rumours, the one more startling than the other. The cook coming back from market brought news of a parcel of combustible materials found concealed in some barn or hay-loft; the boys returned from school full of some mysterious threatening letter, said to have been discovered posted up on a tree of the promenade; and the shopman, while tying up a parcel, sought to enliven us by dark allusions to sinister-looking individuals seen dodging about the scene of conflagration, and apparently regarding their handiwork with fiendish glee.

By daytime these rumours certainly tended to break the monotony of our solitude, and, proud of our superior common-sense, we, the bereaved grass-widows of the absent officers, could afford to laugh at the many ridiculous stories which were scaring our weaker-minded attendants.

Only when darkness had set in, when the children had gone to bed, and we ourselves prepared to spend a long, lonely evening, did these various reports begin to assume a somewhat more definite shape in our brain, and to appear infinitely less absurd than they had done in broad daylight. We nervously wondered whether again this night we should be roused from sleep by the horrid sound of the tocsin. Though it was autumn, not spring, we could not shake ourselves free from an atmosphere of vague April fools on a large and most unpleasant scale, and dimly began to realise what it must feel like to be a Russian emperor, as quaking we counted the days which must elapse before our natural protectors and the defenders of the town were restored to us.

One night, having as usual gone to bed with these sensations, I was just dropping into an uneasy sleep, when, sure enough, shortly before midnight the odiously familiar sound of the fire-alarm broke in upon my dream, and, hastily opening the window, I could see the sky all red with the fiery glare, at what appeared to be a very short distance from our house in the direction of the stables where, about a hundred paces farther up the street, our horses were lodged. My husband's chargers were, of course, away with him at the manoeuvres, but the children's pony and one horse had re-

mained behind ; so, afraid of anything happening to them in case the orderly were asleep or absent, I resolved to go and assure myself of their safety. In a few minutes I was dressed, and, accompanied only by my faithful Brick, who was vastly delighted at the idea of a midnight walk, I left the house.

Before I had gone many steps I saw that my fears for the horses were groundless, the fire being ever so much farther away than had appeared from the window. However, having taken the trouble to rise and dress, I resolved to go on a little, and see whatever there was to be seen. It was a lovely moonlight night, almost as bright as day, only that the town had a much more lively aspect than I had ever seen it wear by daylight, for every one was afoot, and, like myself, hurrying towards the red glare visible over the high-pointed gables.

It proved impossible to get close to the fire, raging in a narrow street at the beginning of the Untere Stadt, but any one standing at the top of the steep stone staircase by which this portion of the town is reached, could command a good view of the scene, all the more striking from being seen from above. After I had stood there for nearly half an hour watching the tossing flames below me, and choked by occasional puffs of smoke, I began to feel both chilly and sleepy, and thought I might as well go back to bed, since it was nearly one

o'clock, and the excitements of this night appeared to be exhausted. I left a large crowd still assembled round the scene of action, while the streets I passed on my homeward way were empty and deserted. Deserted, likewise, was our own street, the Fleischer Gasse, as it lay before me in the moonlight; but as I approached I became aware of the solitary dark-clad figure of a slender young man, walking on the pavement just in front of our house. He seemed to me well dressed, and in appearance thoroughly respectable,—an opinion which Brick, however, failed to share, for he advanced to meet the stranger with a low growl of suppressed but intense disapproval, which compliment the respectable young man returned by savagely hitting the dog with the tightly rolled-up umbrella he carried in his hand.

I should probably not have cast a second look at this stranger, had not something in the needless brutality of his action attracted my attention, and caused me to scan his features. I thus noticed that he appeared to be little over twenty years of age, had a small sallow face, a sprouting moustache, and dark eyes set rather near together.

I rang the house-bell, and my maid came down to let me in, when, to my surprise, the stranger rudely attempted to force himself in behind me; but we slammed the door in his face, and then my

servant told me that this same young man had been hanging about here for over half an hour, and had already once endeavoured to effect an entrance behind some other person.

Two days later the troops came back from the manœuvres, and everything returned to accustomed order and quiet. The officers were, however, one and all far too much engrossed in recollection of those glorious imaginary laurels they had been winning on their bloodless battle-fields, to take interest in anything so commonplace as a real fire; so the tale of the terrors we had undergone during their absence fell upon callous ears, and as no more conflagrations ensued to give colour of semblance to our story, the matter soon lapsed into oblivion.

The usual winter torpor settled down upon the place, and the months wore slowly away towards spring without anything having occurred to disturb their peaceful current, when late on the evening of the 21st of February the almost forgotten sound of the tocsin was again heard in the streets, and simultaneously the news of a fourfold murder spread like wildfire through the town. The house inhabited by a retired military surgeon, Dr Friedenwanger, had been discovered burning, and some members of the fire-brigade, on forcing an entrance, found his corpse, along with that of his wife, child,

and maid-servant, still reeking with warm blood, and mutilated in the most disgusting fashion.

At first everybody was quite at sea as to where to look for the perpetrators of this crime, but by a curious chance, just while Dr Friedenwanger was being buried two days later, a bloody knife and some iron crowbars, found concealed in a drain near the cemetery, led to the identification of the murderers in the person of Anton von Kleeberg and Rudolf Marlin,<sup>1</sup> two young men of respectable burgher families, aged about nineteen and twenty-one. The photographs of these youthful criminals being soon after exhibited in several shop-windows, neither I nor my maid had any difficulty in recognising that of Kleeberg as the portrait of the mysterious stranger who had tried to enter our house on the night of the fire.

Many interesting details, too lengthy to be here recorded, came out at the trial, and a long list of misdeeds was brought home to the culprits, who, amongst other things, confessed to having laid every one of the fires the previous summer, thus diverting public attention while they proceeded to rob some particular house known to be ill guarded or inhabited by women only. There is therefore

<sup>1</sup> In justice to Saxon national feeling, I have been specially requested to mention the fact, that neither of these two young German murderers were of Saxon extraction.



every reason to suppose that Messrs Kleeberg and Marlin, well aware of the temporary absence of all masculine element from the household, had selected our house for a visit of this description ; and I am likewise firmly convinced that my beloved and sagacious dog Brick, with that delicate sense of perception which so favourably distinguishes the canine from the coarser human race, had instantaneously detected the guilty intentions of the very respectable-looking young man we met in the moonlight before our house that September night. The victim, Dr Friedenwanger, enjoyed a bad reputation as a usurer, and his murder had been undertaken for the sake of stealing the watches and jewellery he kept in pawn, while by subsequently setting fire to the premises, the murderers had hoped to annihilate all traces of their crime. Some of the horrible disclosures at the trial brought nevertheless moments of intense satisfaction to more than one female breast, as being so many triumphant vindications of those terrors so cavalierly treated by the other sex a few months before. Did they now realise in what danger we had been last autumn, when they were all away, engrossed in their miserable sham-fights ? Did they know that their homes might have been reduced to ashes while they were complacently toying with blank cartridges ? or that their helpless progeny could easily

have been made mincemeat of while they were slaying their legions of visionary Russians or Turks?

Such the self-evident arguments with which we were now able to clear ourselves from the base imputation of cowardice, and surely no woman worthy her sex forbore to make use of these handy weapons, or missed such glorious opportunity of turning the tables on her lord and master.

Characteristic of Magyar legislation was the circumstance of the whole trial being conducted in Hungarian, though this language was absolutely unknown to the two German prisoners, who were thus debarred the doubtful privilege of comprehending their own death-sentence when finally pronounced about a year after their crime. Like enough, though, its meaning was subsequently made clear to them, for Anton von Kleeberg and Rudolf Marlin were executed at Hermanstadt on the 16th of June 1885.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> As a curious instance of the precariousness of human life, I may here make mention of Colonel P——, a distinguished countryman of ours, then occupying a diplomatic post at Vienna. This gentleman, who had an unwholesome liking for witnessing executions, having accidentally learned that Hermanstadt boasted two candidates for the gallows, had requested a Transylvanian acquaintance to send him timely notice of their hanging, in order that he might assist at the spectacle. This morbid desire was, however, not destined to be satisfied, as long before the slow march of justice had culminated in a death-warrant, Colonel P—— himself had been carried off by the far more rapid Egyptian fever.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

## THE KLAUSENBURG CARNIVAL.

READERS of the foregoing pages will have had occasion to remark that, except when diversified by fire or bloodshed, life at Hermanstadt was *not* a lively one; therefore an invitation which I received during my second winter in Transylvania to spend some weeks at Klausenburg during the carnival season, was very welcome. It was a decided relief to get away from the vulgar monotony of those antiquated flirtations which in Hermanstadt did duty for society, and to be reminded of things one was in danger of forgetting—of fresh young faces, light pretty dresses, and real dancing.

Nor was I disappointed in what I saw during my fortnight's stay at Klausenburg: pretty dresses in plenty; prettier faces, for the girls of the place are justly celebrated for their good looks; and as for dancing—why, I do not think I ever knew before what it was to see real, heartfelt, impassioned, in-

defatigable dancing. An account of the three last carnival days, as I spent them at Klausenburg, will convey some notion of what is there understood by the word dancing.

We had arrived late on the evening of the Saturday preceding Ash Wednesday, therefore only the gentlemen of the party unwilling to lose a single instant of their precious holiday-time rushed off to a large public ball or *redoute*.

The following evening—Carnival Sunday—assembled the whole society in the *salons* of the military commander, Baron V——, whose guest I was at the time. There were from thirty to thirty-six dancing couples, and the first thing to strike a stranger on entering the room was, that not a single plain face was to be seen among them. Almost all the young girls were pretty, some of them remarkably so; dark beauties mostly, with a wealth of black plaits, glorious eyes and creamy complexions, and with the small hand and high-curved instep which characterise Hungarian ladies. The faintest suspicion of a dark shade on the upper lip was not without charm in some cases; and when viewed against a strong light, many of the well-cut profiles had a soft downy appearance, which decidedly enhanced their *piquante* effect. Side by side with these, however, were one or two faces fair enough to have graced any English ball-room.

What pleased me here to see was, that the married women, as a matter of course, leave the dancing-field to the young girls, and do not attempt, by display of an outrageous luxury in dress, to concentrate attention on their own selves: the particular type of exquisite *élégante* never missing from a French or Polish *salon* has no place here. This is surely as it should be and as nature intended; pleasure, dancing, flirtation are for the young and the unmarried, and those who have had their turn should be content to stand aside and look on henceforth: but when, as is too often the case, it comes to be a trial of strength between matrons and maidens as to which shall capture the best partners and carry off the greatest number of trophies, the result can only be an unnatural and distorted state of society.

What Edinburgh society was to London some fifty years ago, so does Klausenburg stand to-day with regard to Pesth. As nearly all the people here are connected by ties of blood as well as of friendship, something of the privacy of a family circle marks their intercourse; and while lacking none of the refining touches of modern civilisation, a breath of patriarchal *sans gêne* pervades the atmosphere.

The weak side of Klausenburg society at present is a minority of gentlemen, as of late years many

members of distinguished families have got to prefer the wider range of excitement offered by a season at Buda-Pesth, to the more restricted circle of a purely Transylvanian society which satisfied their fathers and grandfathers. On this occasion, however, there was no lack of dancers, for the young hussars who had come with us from Hermanstadt efficiently filled up the social gaps, restoring the balance of sex in the most satisfactory manner.

What interested me most in the ball-room was to watch the expression of the Tzigane musicians crowded together in a doorway: their black eyes rolling restlessly from side to side, nothing escapes their notice, and they are evidently far better informed of every flirtation, mistake, coolness, or quarrel in the wind, than the most vigilant chaperone.

Of course here, as at every Hungarian ball, the principal feature was the csardas, and it was curious to see how, at the very first notes of this dance, the young people all precipitate themselves to the end of the room where the musicians are placed, jostling each other in their anxiety each to get nearest to the music. To an uninitiated stranger it looks most peculiar to see this knot of dancers all pressed together like herrings in a barrel in one small corner, while fully two-thirds of a spacious ball-room are standing empty; but the Hungarians

declare that the Tziganes only play the csardas with spirit when they see the dancers at close quarters, treading on their very toes and brushing up against the violins. Sometimes the bandmaster, unable to control his excitement, breaks loose from the niche or doorway assigned to the band, and, advancing into the room, becomes himself the centre of the whirling knot of dancers.

Whenever the csardas comes to an end there is a violent clapping of hands to make the music resume: Hungarians are absolutely insatiable in this respect, and, however long the dance has lasted, there will always be eager cries for more and more and more.

The cotillon, which was kept up till seven in the morning, was fully prettier than any I remember to have seen danced before, for Hungarians are as superior to Germans or Englishwomen in point of grace, as they are to Poles in the matter of animation—and they executed all the usual figures demanding the introduction of a cushion, a mirror, a fan, india-rubber balls, &c., in a manner equally removed from boisterous romping as from languid affectation.

The following evening (Monday) the society re-assembled at the pleasant and hospitable house of Mme. de Z—, whose dark-eyed daughters take a foremost rank among Transylvanian beauties. In

order to have some strength remaining for what was still to come, dancing was on this occasion reduced to the modest allowance of six hours, the gipsies being compulsorily sent away soon after three o'clock in order to force the young people to take some rest.

On Tuesday we all met again at the Casino for the bachelors' ball given by the gentlemen of the place, and where, with the exception of supper and occasional snatches of refreshment, dancing was kept up uninterruptedly till near eight o'clock next morning. At the conclusion of the cotillon each lady received from her partner a pretty white and silver fan, on which her initials were engraved,—a souvenir which I have much pleasure in preserving, in remembrance of the happy days I passed at Klausenburg.

An old traditional dance, which they here call *Écossaise* (but which in reality is simply a *pot-pourri* of several English country-dances), is danced at Klausenburg after midnight on Shrove Tuesday, or rather Ash Wednesday morning.<sup>1</sup> This dance having been somewhat neglected of late years, the young people blundered sorely over some of the figures, and the dance would have lapsed into

<sup>1</sup> I failed to obtain any reliable information as to when and how this dance had been here imported, but it seems to have been in use for a good many generations past.



hopeless chaos had not the former generation gallantly thrown themselves into the breach. Respectable fathers of grown-up daughters, and white-haired grandmothers, now started to their feet, instinctively roused to action by vivid recollections of their own youth; and such is the power of memory, that soon they were footing it with the nimblest dancers, going through each figure with unerring precision, and executing the complicated steps with an accuracy and grace which did honour to the dancing-masters of half a century ago.

One of these figures was the old one of cat and mouse, in which the girl, protected by a ring of dancers, tries to escape the pursuit of her partner, who seeks to break through the line of defenders,—the moment when the cat seizes its prey being always marked by the bandmaster causing his violin to give a piteous squeak, imitating to perfection the agonised death-shriek of a captured mouse.

It is *de rigueur* that the last dance on Ash-Wednesday morning should be executed by daylight. This was about seven o'clock, when, the lights being extinguished and the shutters flung open, the gipsies threw all their remaining energies into a last furious, breathless gallop,—a weirder, wilder scene than I ever witnessed in a ball-room, to look at this frenziedly whirling mass

of figures, but dimly to be descried in the scarcely breaking dawn,—grey and misty looking as ghosts risen from the grave to celebrate their nightly revels, and who, warned by the cock's crow of approaching daybreak, are treading their last mazes with a fast and furious glee; while the wild strains of the Tzigane band, rendered yet more fantastic by the addition of a monstrous drum (expressly introduced for the purpose of adding to the turmoil), might well have been borrowed from an infernal orchestra.

When the gallop came to an end at last, from sheer want of breath on the part of both players and dancers, daylight was streaming into the room, disclosing a crowd of torn dresses, crushed flowers, and flushed and haggard faces, worn with the dissipation of the previous hours — a characteristic sight, but not a beautiful one by any means. Each one now rushed to the tea-room to receive the cups of fresh steaming *kraut Suppe*, served here at the conclusion of every ball. It is made of a species of pickled cabbage, and has a sharp acid flavour, most grateful to a jaded palate, and supposed to be supreme in restoring equilibrium to overtaxed digestions.

While the ladies were resting till their carriages were announced, the gentlemen began to light their cigars, and the Tziganes having recovered strength,

resumed their bows ; but what they now played was no longer dance music, but wild fitful strains and melancholy national airs, addressed now to one, now to another of the listeners grouped about.

In other Continental towns dancing is brought to an end on Ash-Wednesday morning, and most people would suppose that having danced for three nights running, even the youngest of the young would be glad to take some rest at last. Not so at Klausenburg : nobody is ever tired here or has need of rest, as far as I can make out ; and it is a special feature of the place that precisely Ash-Wednesday should be the day of all others when gaiety runs the wildest. The older generation, indeed, lament that dancing is no longer what it used to be, for in their time the Shrove - Tuesday party used never to break up till the Thursday morning, dancing being kept up the whole Wednesday and the following night, people merely retiring in batches for an hour or so at a time to repair the damages to their toilets.

Such desperate dissipation has now been modified, in so far as the party, separating towards 8 or 9 o'clock A.M., only meet again at 6 P.M., first to dine and then to dance. I could not get any one to explain to me the reason of this Ash-Wednesday dissipation, which I have never come across in any other place. Most of those I asked could

assign no reasons at all, except that it had always been the custom there as long as any one could remember; but one version I heard was that in 1848 the Austrian Government took into its head to forbid dancing in Lient. "So, naturally, after that we had to make a point of dancing just on Ash-Wednesday to show our independence," said my informant. The delicate flavour of forbidden fruit, which, no doubt, adds so much to the sweetness of these Ash-Wednesday parties, is kept up by the Klausenburg clergy, who, after having for years vainly attempted to put a stop to this regularly recurring Lenten profanation, now contents itself with a nominal protest each year against the revellers. Thus, as often as the day comes round, a black-robed figure, sent hither to preach sackcloth and ashes, makes his appearance on the ball-room premises; but, more harmless than he looks, his bark is worse than his bite, and he interferes with no one's enjoyment. He does not indite maledictions in letters of fire on the wall; neither does he act the part of Banquo's ghost at the banquet. Probably he has in former years too often acted this part in vain, so finds it wiser now to compromise the matter by accepting a modest sum as alms for his church, and abandoning the sinners to their own devices.

In place of the limp and crushed tulles and tar-

latanes of the previous night, the young girls had mostly now appeared in pretty muslin and fresh summer toilets adorned with natural flowers. Some of them looked rather pale, as well they might after their previous efforts, but at the first notes of the csardas every trace of fatigue was gone as if by magic, and not for worlds would any one of them have consented to sit through a single dance. "Of course I am tired," said a young girl to me, very seriously, "but you see it is quite impossible to sit still when you hear the csardas playing; even if you are dying, you must get up and dance."

For my part, I confess that the mere effort of looking on this fourth night was positive exhaustion. Long after midnight they were still dancing away like creatures possessed; dancing as though they never meant to stop, and as though their very soul's salvation depended on not standing still for a single moment. My brain began to reel, and feeling that worn-out nature could do no more, I made the best of my way to carriage and bed, pursued by nightmares of a never-ending csardas.

After Ash Wednesday, Klausenburg society settled down to a somewhat calmer routine of amusement, consisting in skating, theatre-going, visiting, and parties.

There is a pleasing elasticity about Klausenburg

visiting arrangements, people there restricting themselves to no particular hour, and no precise costume for going to see their acquaintances; so that ladies bound for the theatre or a party may often be seen paying two or three visits *en route*, not at all embarrassed by such trifles as short sleeves or flowers in the hair.

About two parties a-day seemed to be the usual allowance here in Lent. Some of these reunions, beginning at five o'clock, were accompanied by cold coffee, ham sausages, and cakes; others, commencing at nine in the evening, were connected with tea and supper, so that frequently the self-same party might be said to begin in one house and terminate in another.

The gipsies were everywhere and anywhere to be seen, for most of these social gatherings end in dancing, and without the Tzigane no pleasure is considered complete. Pougracz, the present director of the Tzigane band at Klausenburg, has, so to say, grown up in society, his father having filled the post before him, and he himself, a man well on in middle age—with such a delightfully shrewd, good-natured, rascally old face—has played for another generation of dancers, fathers and mothers of the young people who now fill the ball-room. There are other Tzigane bands as good, but his is the only one “in society,” and it is most amusing

to note the half-impudent familiarity of his manner towards both gentlemen and ladies who have grown up to the sound of his fiddle. It is positive agony to him to witness bad dancing, and he was wont to complain most bitterly of one gentleman to whom nature had denied an ear for music (a rare defect in any Hungarian). "None of you young people dance particularly well nowadays," he remarked with frank criticism, "but among you there is one who makes me positively ill to look at. If I were not to play *at* him and send my violin into his feet, he would never be able to get round at all."

On another occasion, when the figures of the *Écossaise* threatened to melt away into hopeless confusion, Pougracz angrily turned round and apostrophised a married lady who was sitting near me. "How can you sit there and see them making such a mess of it all?" he said. "It is not so long ago that you were dancing yourself as to have forgotten all about it, so go and make order amongst them!"

The pretty old-fashioned custom of serenades being still here *en vogue*, sometimes on a dark winter's night, between two and three o'clock, one may hear the Tzigane band strike up under the window of some *fêted* beauty, playing her favourite air or *nota*. The serenade may either have been arranged by a special admirer, or merely by a good

friend of the family. Often, too, several young men will arrange to bring serenades to all the young ladies of their acquaintance, going from one house to another. The lady thus serenaded does not show herself at the window, but if the attention be agreeable to her, she places a lighted candle in the casement in token that the serenade is accepted.

Such acceptance is, however, by no means compromising, no serious construction being necessarily put upon what may simply be intended as a friendly attention.

There is something decidedly refreshing about such frank ovations nowadays, when the lords of creation have become so extremely chary of their precious attentions towards the fair sex. To offer a nosegay to a girl is in some places so fraught with ominous meaning as to be considered equivalent to a marriage proposal, and exquisite young dandies are apt to feel themselves seriously compromised by the gift of a single rosebud.

Only, the Klausenburg roses have no such treacherous thorns, it seems, and methinks society must surely be healthy in a place where any gentleman may—without laying himself open to the charge of lunacy—wake up a whole street at 3 A.M. by instigating a musical row beneath the window of a young lady acquaintance.



## CHAPTER XLVII.

## JOURNEY FROM HERMANSTADT TO KRONSTADT.

THE railway from Hermanstadt to Kronstadt takes us mostly through a rich undulating country, for, leaving the mountains always farther behind us, we only near them again as we approach the end of our journey.

Salzburg, or Vizkana as it is named in Hungarian, renowned for its salt-mines, is the first station on the line on leaving Hermanstadt,—a melancholy, barren-looking place, seemingly engendered by nature in one of her most stagnant moods. A wearisome stretch of sandy hillocks, their outlines broken here and there by unsightly cracks and fissures, is all that meets the eye; not a tree or bush to relieve the monotony of the short stunted grass, where starved-looking daisies, and spiritless, emaciated camomiles, are all the flowers to be seen. No wonder the great white cattle look moody and dissatisfied, as from the sandy cliff

above they sullenly gaze down at their own reflections in the dull green waters of the Tököli Bath. This bath, highly beneficial in cases of acute rheumatism, is nothing more than an old salt-mine dating back to the time of the Romans, and which, through some accident or convulsion of nature, has been flooded. The brine it contains is so strong as to bear up the heaviest bodies and render sinking an impossibility, so that, though of tremendous depth, persons absolutely ignorant of swimming can walk about it in perfect safety, with head and shoulders well above the surface.

There are various other baths in the place, all somewhat weaker than the Tököli and other salt-mines, which, only worked in winter, yearly furnish some 80,000 hundredweight of salt. But the weirdest and gloomiest spot about Salzburg is an old ruined mine, deserted since 1817, and where over 300 Honved soldiers found their grave in 1849. They fell in battle against the revolutionary Wallachians, and, as the simplest mode of burial, their bodies were thrown down the old shaft, which is over 600 feet deep and filled with water to about a quarter of its depth.

A magnificent echo can be obtained by firing a gun or pistol down the shaft, but it is dangerous to approach the edge because of earth-slips, for which reason the place is enclosed by a wire railing.





*Schässburg.*

[To face p. 256.]

(Reprinted from publication of the Transylvanian Carpathian Society.)

However, neither this danger nor the fear of the 300 ghosts who may well be supposed to haunt the spot, are sufficient to restrain the Roumanians from prowling about the place. On fine moonlight nights—as I was told by the revenue officials, whose guard-house is close by—they will let themselves down by ropes to chip off whole sackfuls of salt. Sometimes they have been caught in the act by some wide-awake official, who then threatens to cut the rope and send the culprits to rejoin the Honveds below, till the unfortunate wretches are forced to sue for their lives in deadliest fear.

The prettiest of the Saxon towns we passed on our way to Kronstadt is Schässburg, situated on the banks of the river. Towers and ramparts peep out tantalisingly from luxurious vegetation, making us long to get out and explore the place; particularly inviting is a steep flight of steps leading to an old church at the top of a hill.

It is here that Hungary's greatest poet, Petöfi, perished in the battle of Schässburg on the 31st of July 1849, when the revolted Hungarians, led by the Polish general Bern, were crushed by the superior numbers of the Russian troops come to Austria's assistance.

Petöfi's body was never found, nor had any one seen him fall, and for many years periodical reports got afloat in Hungary that the great poet

was not dead, but pining away his life in the mines of Siberia. There seems, however, to be no valid reason for believing this tale, and more likely his was one of the many mutilated and unrecognisable corpses which strewed the valley of Schässburg on that disastrous day.

To the west of the town we catch sight of a solitary turret perched on the overhanging cliff above the river: it is said to mark the place where a Turkish pasha, besieging the town with his army, was slain by a shot fired from the goldsmith's tower. The pasha was buried here sitting on his elephant, and this tower raised above them, while that other tower from whence the shot was fired, held ever since in high honour, was decked out with a golden ceiling. This latter has now fallen into ruin, and the inscription on the pasha's resting-place has become almost illegible, but the legend still runs in the people's mouths, and is told in verse as follows:—

“By Schässburg, on the mountain  
A turret grey doth stand,  
And from the heights it gazes  
Down on the Kokel land.  
And ne'er a passing wand'rer  
This turret who doth see,  
But pauses to inquire here  
What may its meaning be.

It is a proud remembrance  
Of doughty deeds and bold.

Still faithfully the people  
Relate this legend old :  
In bygone days of trouble  
Went forth, with sword and brand,  
A mighty Turkish pasha,  
To devastate the land.

Thus also would he conquer  
This ancient Saxon town ;  
But here each man was ready  
To die for its renown.  
And there upon the mountain  
The pasha took his stand,  
An elephant bestriding,  
And scimitar in hand.

The mighty Ali Pasha,  
He swears with curses wild,  
That by his beard will he destroy  
The Saxon, chick and child.  
Then struck the haughty Moslem  
Full in the breast a ball ;  
With curses yet upon the lip,  
A death-prey he must fall.

The leaden ball came flying,  
Full thousand paces two,  
From out a fortress turret,  
With deadly aim and true.  
A sturdy goldsmith was it  
Who fired this famous shot ;  
The Turkish horde, which seeing,  
Their courage all forgot.

And panic-struck escaping,  
Their pasha left to die,  
The elephant still bestriding,  
With fixed and glassy eye.  
Then sallied forth the Saxons  
As thus the Moslems fled,  
And gazed on the dead pasha  
With joy and yet with dread.

They built up Ali Pasha  
Within that turret grey,  
From head to foot still armed  
In battle-field array;  
His elephant beside him  
Was buried here as well,<sup>1</sup>  
And outside an inscription  
Their history doth tell.

By times a plaintive wailing  
May here be heard at night;  
Or chance you to see flitting  
A phantom figure white,  
The pasha 'tis, who cannot  
Find lasting rest, they say,  
Because 'mid heavy curses  
His spirit passed away."

Another point of interest we see from the railway is the ruined castle of Marienburg, crowning a bare hill to our right hand, about half an hour before reaching Kronstadt, built by the knights of the Teutonic order during their occupation of the Burzenland in the early part of the thirteenth century.

These knights, whose order unites some of the conditions of both Templars and Maltese knights, had been founded in Palestine about the year 1190, for the double purpose of tending wounded crusaders, and, like these, combating the enemies of the Holy Sepulchre. Only Germans of noble birth were admitted as members, under condition of the cus-

<sup>1</sup> Why the elephant was also buried is not very apparent, as it is hardly to be supposed that it was killed by the same shot which slew the pasha.



tomary vows of chastity and obedience. They had, however, not been long in existence when their position in Palestine began to grow insecure; and casting about their eyes in search of some more tenable position, they were met half-way by the King of Hungary, Andreas II., who, on his side, was in want of some powerful alliance to secure the eastern provinces of Transylvania against the repeated invasions of the Kumanes.

The negotiations between the monarch and the Teutonic order seem to have lasted several years, being finally brought to a conclusion in 1211 in a treaty signed by the king in presence of eighteen distinguished witnesses. This treaty distinctly sets forth that the part of the country called the Burzenland, and whose boundaries are exactly defined, is bequeathed as irrevocable gift to the knights of the Teutonic order by the king, who, hoping thereby to obtain pardon of his sins and secure eternal salvation for himself and his ancestors likewise, intrusts to them the defence of the eastern frontier of his kingdom against barbaric invasions. In this document, which is lengthy and involved, are likewise set forth all the rights, obligations, privileges, and restrictions of the said knights. They were exempted from all the usual taxes and tributes to the king, who, however, did not resign his claim to the sovereignty of the land, reserving to himself on all

occasions the right of ultimate decision in cases of contested justice. Whatever gold or silver was discovered in the soil was to belong, half to the king, half to the order. Though granting the utmost freedom in all matters relating to trade and commerce, the Hungarian monarch retained the sole right of coinage; and while permitting the knights to erect the wooden fortresses and citadels which were amply sufficient to resist attacks from the barbarians, it was distinctly stipulated that they were not to build castles or fortifications of stone.

Barring these few restrictions, the land was to be absolutely their own; and had the knights been wise enough to keep to the compact, no doubt the Teutonic order might yet be flourishing to-day in Transylvania, instead of having been ignominiously expelled after scarce a dozen years' residence.

At first the new arrangement seems to have been most beneficial to the country; for we hear of growing prosperity and of flourishing agriculture and commerce, and many German villages which acknowledged the Teutonic knights as their feudal masters were founded at that time.

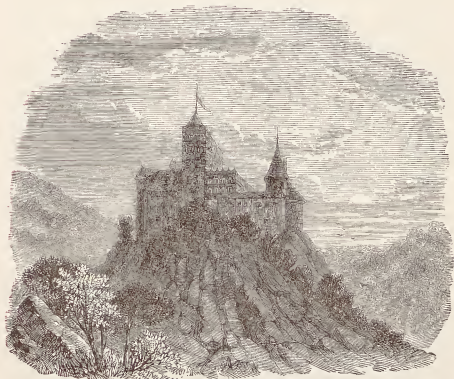
But the good understanding between King Andreas and the knights was of short duration, for before ten years had elapsed we already read of dissensions cropping up: the knights are accused

of extending their boundaries beyond the prescribed limits, of issuing an independent coinage, of building stone castles, and of bribing away German colonists to settle on their own land to the detriment of other provinces—all of which things were distinctly interdicted by the terms of agreement. Many stories, too, are told of their cruel tyranny towards unfortunate serfs—such, for instance, as compelling several hundreds of them to pass whole nights in the marshes round Marienburg, each man armed with a long switch wherewith to flog the troublesome frogs, whose croaking disturbed the slumbers of the holy men up in the castle.

King Andreas, who was of a weak, vacillating disposition, was easily persuaded by counsellors antagonistic to the order to revoke the deed of gift, which proclamation was issued in 1221, accompanied by an order to the knights to evacuate the territory and the strongholds they had built. Before, however, this had been effected, the Pope, Honorius III., himself a special protector of the order, intervened, effecting a reconciliation, the result of which was a fresh treaty confirming the previous donation. This renewed deed of gift not only ratified all the terms of the previous document, but actually increased the privileges enjoyed by the knights, granting them among other things the much-coveted right of building stone castles.

In spite, however, of some notable victories over the Kumanes in 1224, and the brilliant prospects thereby opened of enlarging their domains, the Teutonic knights were not destined to shine much longer in the land they had thus successfully civilised and made arable. No doubt they hastened their own downfall by the signal short-sightedness of their grand-master, Hermann von Salza, who committed the error of taking upon himself to offer the supremacy of the Burzenland to the Holy See, begging the Pope to enrol this province among the Papal States. Of course the knights had no right thus to dispose of a domain which they only held as subjects of the Hungarian Crown ; and though the Pope, as was to be expected, gladly accepted the handsome donation, the king as naturally resented a proceeding which could only be regarded as the blackest high treason. This time the breach was such as could no longer be bridged over by any attempt at reconciliation. The Teutonic knights had made themselves too many enemies, and especially the king's eldest son (afterwards Bela IV.) was strenuous in urging his father to eject the order from the land. This sentence was carried out, not without much trouble and bloodshed ; for the knights were little disposed to disgorge this valuable possession. Even when at last compelled to turn their backs on Transylvania,

which appears to have been about 1225, it was long before they relinquished the hope of ultimately regaining their lost paradise. But all efforts in this direction proved unavailing ; for it was decreed that the German knights were to behold the Burzenland no more.



*Castle of Törzburg.*

I have not been able to obtain any picture of Marienburg, and to the best of my knowledge none such has ever been executed, which is all the more to be lamented, as this interesting ruin, like so many others in the country, bids fair to vanish ere long without leaving any trace behind. In default,

therefore, of Marienburg, I offer a picture of the Castle of Törzburg, another of those seven fortresses raised by the Teutonic knights during their brief but brilliant reign. This castle, lying south of Kronstadt, at the entrance of the similarly named pass, has, however, lost much of its former romantic appearance. Since 1878, when the Hungarian Government thought necessary to guard the frontier against Roumania, it was converted into a soldiers' barracks; and though no longer used for that purpose, no steps have yet been taken to restore the edifice to its original form by rebuilding the slender turrets of which it had been divested.

Shortly before reaching Kronstadt, our train came to an unexpected standstill in the midst of a wide-stretching plain. Some flocks were grazing on either side of the rails, but there was no station or guard-house in sight to explain this unaccountable stoppage, and there seemed to be nothing to suggest an accident, till, stretching our heads out of the window, we saw a group of people bending over a formless mass which lay on the rails some hundred yards to our rear. One of the passengers who happened to be a doctor was hastily summoned to the spot, but he returned shaking his head, for his science could do nothing here. A shepherd lad aged twelve or thirteen had been

lying across the rails seemingly asleep in the sun. He lay so flat that the engine-driver had failed to perceive him till the last moment, and then only had seen how a white figure had jumped up in front of the engine, but instantaneously caught by a blow from the engine-fliers, was stricken down to rise no more.

Had the boy been asleep or intoxicated, or whether it were an accident or a suicide, none could tell. We were thankful to be far enough from the scene to be spared the sight of the horrible details—how horrible could be guessed from the expression of those who were now slowly returning to resume their places in the train.

As we moved away I could only discern how two men were lifting the body from the rails, and how a woman with uplifted arms was running across a field towards them.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

## KRONSTADT.

It needed the sight of beautiful Kronstadt to efface the impression of this ghastly picture—beautiful, indeed, as it clings to the steep mountain-side, looking as though the picturesque houses and turrets had been carved out of the rocks which tower above them.

At Hermanstadt the view of the mountain-chain is grander and more sublime, but Kronstadt has the advantage of being in itself part and portion of the mountain scenery, the fashionable promenade winding in serpentine curves up the Kapellen Berg to the back of the town being but the beginning of an ascent which, if pursued, will lead us to a height of wellnigh 7000 feet.

Without, however, going any such desperate distance, merely from the top of the Kapellen Berg or Zinne (1300 feet above the town), to be reached without perceptible effort, we can enjoy one of the



finest views to be seen throughout Transylvania, offering as it does a singularly harmonious blending of wild uncultured nature and rich pastoral scenery.

Not far below the highest point of the Kapellen Berg is a small cave which goes by the name of the Nonnenloch (Nun's hole). A hermit is said to have lived here for many years ; but it is more celebrated as having been the haunt of a monstrous serpent, which hence used to pounce down upon inadvertent wanderers. On one occasion it is said to have carried off and devoured a student who was reading near the town wall ; but tormented by thirst after this plentiful repast, the monster drank water till it burst. The portrait of this gigantic snake may still be seen painted on the old town wall near the barracks.

There is another legend relating to the Kronstadt Kapellen Berg, which, though somewhat lengthy, is too graceful to be refused a place here :—

“Many, many years ago there lived at the Kronstadt gymnasium a student who was uncommon wise and God-fearing, and who could preach so well that it often happened that he was delegated by any one of the town clergymen, when indisposed with a cold or toothache, to preach in his stead. And this the student did right willingly ;

for he received for each sermon half a Hungarian florin, which was good pay for those times. But still more for the honour and glory did he like to do it: and the most praiseworthy thing about it was, that he did not copy out his sermons from a book, but that he composed them unaided out of his own mind and learnt them by rote; and as, moreover, he had a fine manner of delivery, it was a pleasure to listen to him. Whenever he had to learn a sermon by heart, it was his custom to seek out solitary places where he might be undisturbed, but his favourite haunt used to be the steep wooded hill behind the town.

“Thus one day, having to learn a sermon to be preached on the morrow at the Johannis Kirche (the present Catholic Franciscan church), our student as usual repaired to his favourite haunt. He had just finished his self-allotted task, and was preparing to go home, when he espied a beautiful bird, which, hopping about on an overhanging branch, seemed to be intently gazing at him. The student approached the bird, but when he had reached it so close as almost to touch it with his hand, it flew off some paces farther up the hill, alighting on another branch and gazing on him as before. Again he followed the bird, which, repeating its former manœuvre, led him on by degrees almost to the top of the hill to the spot now known as the Nonnen-

loch. Here the bird disappeared into a thicket, still followed by the student, who, bending aside the branches, saw a broad cleft in the rock, wide enough to admit a man's body. He could still descry the bird, which, flying in through the opening, was soon lost to sight in the cavernous depths within.

"Wonderingly he entered the cave and penetrated a considerable way into the mountain, not understanding, however, how it was that, though so far removed from the light of day, he was yet perfectly able to distinguish his surroundings as in a sort of twilight. Suddenly at the end of the cave, which had now contracted to a narrow passage, he was confronted by the figure of a dwarf with pale face and long grey beard, who cried in a deep angry voice, 'Who art thou? and what seekest thou here?'

"The student felt sorely afraid, but took heart, seeing that his conscience was clear and he had done no harm; so he related to the dwarf how, having come hither to learn his sermon, which by the help of God he hoped to preach next day in the Johannis Kirche, he had been led by the bird ever up the hill and deeper into the forest, till he reached this cave.

"At the very first word the manikin's face grew mild and benevolent. 'So thou art he?' he said in a gentle voice, when the other had finished

speaking. ‘Often have I listened to thee reciting thy sermons down in the forest, and have been rejoiced and edified by the beautiful words. I am the *Berg - Geist* (mountain - spirit), and the bird which enticed thee hither is in my service, and did so by my order, for I wished to know thee. Thou shalt not repent having come hither, for I will show thee what no mortal eye has seen.’

“At a sign from the dwarf an invisible door at the extremity of the cave flew open, and following his guide, the student gazed about him in speechless wonder. He now found himself in a vault far wider and loftier than the church nave, and though there were here neither windows nor torches, the whole building was pervaded by a rosy transparent twilight. What a gorgeous and splendid sight now met his eyes! The arches on which rested the vault were of massive silver, and of silver too the pillars which supported them. The ribs of the arches were of gold, as likewise the ornaments on the columns. Moreover, these columns were encircled by flower - garlands composed of many-coloured precious stones—diamonds, rubies, emeralds, sapphires, and topazes; while hundreds more of the same stones lay strewn about on the ground. How all this glittered and sparkled before the eyes of the wondering student!

“‘See,’ spoke the dwarf, ‘this is a workshop, and

there are many more such in the heart of the mountains, where, out of gold, silver, and precious stones, we spirits fashion the flowers that deck the surface of the earth. You foolish mortals no doubt believe the flowers to sprout of themselves in spring to enamel meadow and forest in blue, red, and yellow tints. But learn that this is the work of us, the mountain-spirits, who by order of the Creator wander over the surface of the earth, unseen by men, sowing broadcast the mountain-treasures which glitter in the sunshine in manifold shapes and colours. And in autumn, when the flowers wither, we go forth again to gather in the gems we have strewn, and hide them in rocky strongholds till spring comes round again. Thus do we strive to rejoice the hearts of men by letting their eyes feast on the works of the Creator. But,' he continued, laughing maliciously, 'we feel but contempt and derision for such foolish mortals as, having become possessed of some stray grains of our flower-seed, which they have perchance discovered in a torrent-bed or rocky fissure, set great store on their possession, decking themselves out with it as though each simple field-flower were not more beautiful by far than the gem from which it has sprung.'

"The words of the mountain-spirit well pleased the student, and he thought of the text of the ser-

mon he was about to preach on the morrow, treating of the lilies of the field, which neither toil nor spin, and are yet more gorgeous than Solomon in all his glory. But at the same time there went through his brain other thoughts of less lofty nature. To a poor devil such as he, a pocketful of these glittering stones would be a most acceptable present—sufficient probably to relieve him of all material anxiety, and enable him to go to Germany to finish his studies. Vainly he hoped that the grey-bearded dwarf might tender some such gift, but to his discomfiture the *Berg-Geist* betrayed no such intention.

“Something more than an hour the student spent in contemplation of the riches of the cavern; then he bethought himself of home, and begged the dwarf to let him out.

“‘The little bird,’ spoke the spirit, ‘who brought thee hither, will conduct thee back through the cleft.’ But as they neared the entrance of the vault, the student made a feint of stumbling, and as he did so, surreptitiously caught up a handful of gems, which he secreted in the pocket of his dolman. The old dwarf said nothing, but smiled sarcastically, and the student deemed his manœuvre to have passed unnoticed.

“Suddenly the dwarf had disappeared, and the student found himself again in the cleft of rock

where an hour previously the bird had lured him ; and here, too, the bird itself was waiting for him, and, hopping cheerfully in front, soon conducted him back to the light of day, whereupon it disappeared into the bushes.

“ Our student felt heartily thankful to be delivered from the somewhat uncanny surroundings, and to see the blue sky and the golden sunshine once more. But, strange to say, as he pursued his way homewards down the hill to regain the town by the upper gate, many things struck him as unknown and unfamiliar. The people he met were not attired according to the fashion of the day ; the path was smoother and better kept ; even the very trees seemed changed, and no more the same he had seen growing there when he had gone up the hill that morning. He specially remembered a slender young lime-tree which had been planted only the spring before : where had it now gone to ? and how came there to be an aged and majestic tree in its place ?

“ As he entered the town gate that leads into the *Heilig-leichnams Gasse* (Corpus Christi Street), many things likewise appeared strange : the houses had foreign shapes, and out of their windows there peeped unknown faces.

“ While ruminating over these puzzling facts he bethought himself of the treasure he carried in his

pocket, and his conscience began to prick him, that he, who until now had been careful to keep the Ten Commandments, had now made himself guilty of breaking the seventh one. It seemed to him as though the purloined gems were burning through the coat into his heart. Thus thinking, he approached the river in order to ease his conscience by throwing in the stolen property. He put his hand into his pocket and drew it out full, but before throwing away the treasure he wished to take a last look at the glittering stones. But what was this? A handful of coarse gravel was all he held. Some witchcraft must be here at work; and a cold shudder ran over his frame, but he was thankful to be rid of the accursed jewels.

“At last he had reached the school, and stepped over the threshold of the door. Several students met him in the corridors or coming down the staircase; but he, who knew every one about the place, was surprised to see nought but strange faces, who stared back at him with astonishment equal to his own.

“He entered his little bed-chamber, but here also all was different: no press, no table, no chair remained of those he had left there that morning; the very bed was another one, and the occupants of the room knew him as little as he knew them.

“This was surely a greater wonder than all that



had happened to him up yonder at the cavern? It needed all his self-control to keep his faculties together and prevent himself from going mad. And he must keep his reason; for was he not to preach his sermon next day in the church of St John?

“He fared no better when, hoping to find a way out of his dilemma, he rushed wildly to the rector’s abode. The voice which responded ‘*Intra*’ to his modest knock was a strange one; and as he, entering, saw a stranger sitting at the writing-table, he timidly said that he wished to speak to the *Virum pereximium*. ‘I am he,’ was the answer; ‘who are you, and what seek you here? I am acquainted with all the students of the gymnasium. How come you to be wearing their dress?’

“Our student now mentioned his name, and related how he had been delegated by the reverend and worthy minister such-and-such to preach on the following day; how he had gone out early on to the hill to learn his sermon by rote, and all that subsequently happened to him. Everything he related faithfully, excepting the episode regarding the handful of glittering stones, which he thought better to conceal. Then he told how on his return he found everything changed as by an evil charm—how he knew nobody, and was known by none in return.

“When the student had first named himself, and

likewise mentioned the name of the preacher whose place he was to take next day, an expression of wondering astonishment had dawned on the rector's face, which grew more intense as the narrative proceeded. When the student had finished his story, he turned round hastily and took from the book-case behind him an ancient volume in pigskin binding.

“‘Yes; here it stands in the *Albo studiosæ juventutis gymnasii, anno Domini* 1—: “On the — of the month of August did the *Studiosus Togatus N—— N—— ex ædibus gymnasii*, absent himself from here and did not again return, which defalcation caused all the greater consternation as the said *studiosus* had been delegated to preach next day, being the fifteenth Sunday after Trinity, in the church of St Johannes, and in lieu of the sermon a *lectio biblica* had to be held instead.” And this happened,’ wound up the rector, turning to the student, ‘exactly a hundred years ago to-day.’

“And so it was in truth: the time he had spent in the cave had seemed but an hour to the young man, and in reality a hundred years had passed! Everything around him had changed except his own self; for the years that had fled had left no mark on him, and he looked young and strong as a youth of scarce twenty years.

“It is easy to conceive how this wonderful story was swiftly spread throughout the town, and especially what sensation it caused amid the Kronstadt students, amongst whom the centenarian youth was now permitted to resume his place. Then as the mid-day bell had just tolled, and our student felt a mighty craving of hunger within him (which was not wonderful, considering that he had fasted for a century), he did not require much pressing to sit down at the dinner-board with his companions.

“But oh, wonder of wonders! hardly had he swallowed the first spoonful of the dish before him, when his whole appearance began to change: his dark hair turned gradually white, and fell from his head like snowflakes; his features shrank perceptibly, and the bloom of his cheek gave place to an ashy pallor; his eye grew dim; and scarcely had his comrades, hastening to support his sinking frame, laid him upon a bed, when with a last deep-drawn breath he expired.

“For some years after this, many Kronstadt students used to haunt the hill along the town, in hopes that the bird might appear and lead them into the enchanted cavern, secretly resolving well to line their pockets with the riches it contained—for that the jewels were subsequently changed to gravel they had not been informed. But though

many have searched for the spot, none ever succeeded in finding it again, so that by degrees the love of reciting sermons on the mountain died out, and the whole story lapsed into oblivion. Also, the page from the *Albo scholastico* where mention is made of this is said to be missing, so that now but a few old people are acquainted with this legend, and fewer still there are who yet believe it."

Kronstadt—or Brasso, as it is called in Hungarian—lying at a height of 1900 feet above the sea-level, is of more mixed complexion than other Transylvanian towns, and is already mentioned in the thirteenth century as having a mixed population of Saxons, Szekels, and Wallachs. Whereas Klausenburg is exclusively a Hungarian, and Hermanstadt a Saxon city, Kronstadt partakes a little of both characters, and has, moreover, a dash of oriental colouring about it. In the streets, besides the usual contingent of fiery Magyars, stolid Saxons, melancholy Roumains, ragged Tziganes, and solemn Armenians, we pass by other figures, red-fezzed, be-turbaned, or long-robed, which, giving to the population a kaleidoscopic effect, make us feel that we are next door to the East, and only a few steps removed from such things as camels, minarets, and harems.

Kronstadt is said to derive its name from a

golden crown found suspended on a broken tree-stump about the year 1204. A fugitive king—such is one version of the story—had here deposited his head-gear, no doubt finding it inconvenient when flying through the forest. On the spot where the royal insignia was found, was raised the present town of Kronstadt, whose arms consist of the image of a crown suspended on a stump. The tree-stump represents the town, we are told, its roots the *Burzen-* or *Wurzel-land*, while the crown is figurative of the Hungarian monarch.<sup>1</sup> The original crown is said to have been long treasured up in the guildhall of Kronstadt, and jealously guarded by the citizens, who showed it but rarely, and as special mark of favour to some potentate. An old writer, of the year 1605, described this crown as being of gold and decorated with golden plumes, and mentions that it was Gregory, the despotic king of Moesia, who, obliged to withdraw from the siege of Kronstadt, and defeated by the Turkish pasha Mizetes, laid down his crown on the stump where it was afterwards found by Kronstadt citizens.

There is another story, which relates that this crown belonged to Solomon, King of Hungary, who

<sup>1</sup> According to others, the name of Kronstadt would be derived from the *Kronenbeeren* (cranberries) which grow profusely on the surrounding hills.

died dethroned in the eleventh century, and spent his last years living as a hermit in a romantic valley near Kronstadt which still bears his name. Feeling his death approach, he concealed his golden



*King Matthias Corvinus.*

crown in a hollow beech-tree, where long afterwards it was discovered by some shepherds, when the tree, becoming old and rotten, had fallen to the ground.

The Feast of St John the Baptist (June 24) was

generally regarded as the anniversary of the crown-finding, to commemorate which it used to be customary to hoist up at the end of a high May-pole a crown woven together of ripe cherries, roses, and rosemary, and adorned with gingerbread figures and cakes of various sorts. The youth of both sexes danced round this pole to the sound of music, and whoever succeeded in scaling the height and carrying off the crown, received a handsome prize.

A dilapidated crown carved in the stone façade of an old house in the *Purzelgasse* at Kronstadt, gives evidence that here King Matthias, once travelling *incognito*, as was his wont, entered and consumed the frugal meal of six eggs, leaving behind him on the table-cloth a paper on which were written the Latin words:—

“Hic fuit Matthias rex comedit ova sex.”<sup>1</sup>

The principal church at Kronstadt, dating from the end of the fourteenth century, contains many objects of interest, besides an organ which is of European reputation. In the sacristy are preserved rich old vestments remaining from Catholic times, perfect masterpieces of elaborate embroidery, such as I have not anywhere seen surpassed.

<sup>1</sup> It is of this monarch that the people still say, “King Matthias is dead, and Justice along with him.” He was, in fact, a sort of Hungarian Haroun-al-Raschid, going about in disguise amongst his people, rewarding them according to their deserts.

Sometimes a cope or chasuble is covered with a whole gallery of figures executed in raised work, each detail of expression and every fold of the drapery being rendered in a manner approaching the sculptor's art.

In the church itself hang some of the most exquisite Turkish carpets I have ever seen — such tender idyllic blue-green tints, such gloomy passionate reds, such pensive amber shades, as to render distracted with envy any amateur of antique fabrics who has the harrowing disappointment of ascertaining that these masterpieces of the oriental loom are not purchaseable even for untold sums of heavy gold!

“There was *ein verrückter Engländer* (a mad Englishman) here some years ago,” I was told by a churchwarden, “who would have given any price for that pale-blue one up yonder, and he remained here a whole month merely to be able to see it every day; but he had to go away empty-handed at last, for these carpets, like the vestments, are the property of the Church, and not even the bishop himself has power to dispose of them.”



## CHAPTER XLIX.

## SINAÏA.

FROM Kronstadt we made an excursion to Sinaïa, a fashionable watering-place and summer residence of the King of Roumania, about two hours' distance over the frontier.

We had provided ourselves with a passport from Hermanstadt, for just at that particular moment the regulations about crossing the frontier were rather strict, in consequence of some temporary coolness between the two crowned heads on either side. Usually the *entente cordiale* between both countries is most satisfactory, and Austrian officers wishing to pay their respects to his Roumanian Majesty can always count on a gracious reception; but we happened unfortunately to have hit off a brief period of international sulks. Austrian officers were forbidden to show themselves in uniform within the kingdom, or indeed to cross the frontier at all, and were consequently reduced to the subterfuges of passports and plain clothes.

It ultimately proved to be much easier to cross from Hungary to Roumania than *vice versâ*; for on our way back that same evening, we were detained an eternity by the suspicious pedantry of the Hungarian officials, contrasting unfavourably with the genial simplicity of arrangements on the other side.

The whole route from Kronstadt to Sinaïa is very beautiful, the railway running through a deep valley which sometimes narrows to the dimensions of a close mountain-gorge, densely wooded on either side by noble beech-forests, bordered by fringes of wild sunflowers, which marked the way in a line of unbroken gold. One might almost have fancied that some munificent fairy had thus chosen to show the way to the King's abode, by strewing gold-pieces along the road.

The glimpses of peasant life we got by looking out of the carriage-window, already showed us costumes more varied and fantastic than on the Hungarian side; an air of Eastern luxury as well as of Eastern indolence pervaded everything, and it was impossible not to feel that we had entered another country—the land *beyond* the land beyond the forest.

At Sinaïa itself the valley has somewhat widened out, affording room for numerous handsome villas and luxurious hotels which have sprung up there

of late years. On a low hill stands the convent where the royal family have taken up their residence till the new-built castle is ready to be inhabited.

Proceeding on our way towards the convent, we were puzzled for a moment by the appearance of the peasant-women we met—their surprising richness of costume and profusion of ornament surpassing the limits of even Roumanian gorgeousness. Their straight-cut scarlet aprons were literally one mass of rich embroidery, and each movement of the arm caused the sleeve to glitter in the sun like the scales of gold and silver fish; but why, in place of the customary sandals, did they wear delicate high-heeled *chaussure* strongly suggestive of Paris? Why, instead of the twirling distaff, did we see Japanese fans in their hands? And why, oh why, as we came within earshot, did we make the startling discovery that they were not talking Roumanian at all, but speaking French with more or less successful imitations of a Parisian accent?

These various “whys” were soon put to rest by the information that these were not peasants at all, but Roumanian Court ladies, who, following the example of their Queen, adopt the national dress for daily wear during the summer months.

It being Sunday, Mass had just finished as we reached the convent, whence a motley congregation

of officers and ladies, soldiers, peasants, and monks, came pouring out. A sentry walking up and down in a somewhat *nonchalant* manner, as though merely taking a mild constitutional, and a red-and-blue flag waving above the low roof of the old-fashioned shabby building, were the only symptoms of royalty about the place.

Presently a low basket-carriage, drawn by two handsome cream ponies with distressingly long tails and ill-cut manes, came round to the convent door, close to where we were standing, and was entered by a slender lady attired in the national costume, bareheaded, and holding up a Chinese parasol to protect herself from the broiling sun. She appeared to be on easy cordial terms with the respectable-looking family servant who assisted her to get in, and had quite a pleasant chat with him as he stood on the doorstep. It was evident, from the way she was saluted on her passage, that the Queen is a great favourite with people of all classes.

The King, whom we came across a little later in the day, seemed of more unapproachable species, and the little incident connected with his appearance savoured rather of Russian than of Roumanian etiquette.

We were walking in the direction of the newly built castle, which, situated on the banks of a

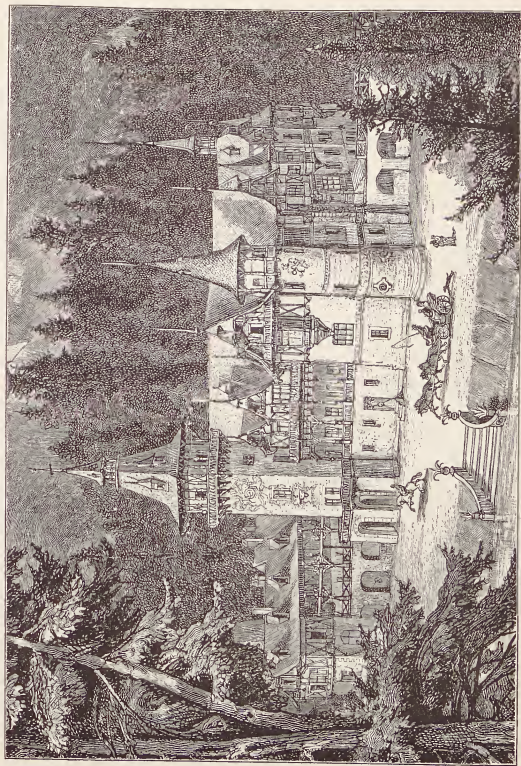
torrent at the opening of a steep mountain-ravine, and deliciously shrouded in gigantic trees, is the most perfect beau-ideal of a summer chateau I ever saw. Already I had had occasion to remark the appearance of several semi-military-looking beings (whether policemen or soldiers I cannot precisely define) dodging about mysteriously in and out between the tree-stems, when suddenly one of them came rushing towards us, waving his arms aloft like a windmill gone mad, and with an expression of the wildest despair hurriedly repeating something we failed to understand, but which evidently was either a warning or a threat. Before we had time to request this curious being to explain himself more intelligibly, he had disappeared, jumping over the steep precipitous bank of the ravine, and vanishing in the brushwood.

We now looked round in alarm, half expecting to see a furious wild boar, possibly even a bear, appearing from the mountain-side, but could only perceive a tall, dark, handsome officer approaching us, and behind him a correct-liveried servant carrying a railway rug. The meaning of the mysterious warning now began to dawn on our comprehension; this could only be the King, from his resemblance to the portraits we had seen, and we had probably no business to be here prying on his private premises. Our feeling of tact was, however,

not exquisite enough to induce us to risk our necks in endeavouring to conceal ourselves from his august gaze, so we bravely stood our ground, and nothing worse happened than our bow being very politely returned.

When his Majesty had disappeared, I went to the bank to see what had become of the unfortunate soldier or policeman who had effaced himself in so foolhardy a manner ; but though I half expected to see his corpse lying shattered at the foot of the rock, no trace of him was there to be seen.

The castle, now completed, and since 1884 inhabited every summer by the royal family, is built in the old German style, and has, I hear, been fitted up and furnished in most exquisite fashion — each article having been carefully selected by the Queen herself, whose artistic taste is well known. Deeper in the forest, at a little distance from the castle, is a tiny hunting-lodge, where in the hot weather the Queen is wont to spend a great part of the day. It is here that she loves to sit composing those graceful poems in which she endeavours to reflect the spirit and heart of her people ; and visitors admitted to this royal sanctuary are sometimes fortunate enough to see the latest rough-cast of a poem, bearing the signature of Carmen Sylva, lying open on the writing-table.



*Castle Pelesch at Sinaia. Summer residence of the King of Roumania.*

[To face p. 290.]





The villas about Sinaïa are rather bare-looking as yet, especially on a burning summer day; for parks and gardens have not had time to grow in proportion to the hot-headed mushroom speed with which this whole colony has sprung into existence. The bathing establishment is one of the most delightful I ever saw—a large marble basin, roofed in and lighted from above, framed with a luxuriant fringe of feathery ferns and aquatic plants trailing down on to the surface of an exceptionally clear and crystal-like water. When the Queen comes hither to bathe, the walls are further adorned by hangings of oriental carpets and embroidered draperies.

There are in the place several good restaurants whose cookery might rival any Vienna or Paris establishment, and, for prices, indeed surpass them. Everything we found to be very dear at Sinaïa. As we were returning to Kronstadt in the evening and intended to walk about all day, we did not engage a bedroom at the hotel, but merely asked for some place where we might deposit our wraps and umbrellas. For this purpose we were given a sort of small closet, semi-dark, being only lighted from the staircase, and containing, besides a broken table, but two deal chairs and an unfurnished bedstead. Yet for this luxurious accommodation, which our effects enjoyed during

a period of about eight hours, we were charged the modest sum of fifteen francs.

I spent some time at a very fascinating bazaar, where I purchased a few specimens of Roumanian pottery, dainty little red-and-gold cups for black coffee, some grotesque birds and an impossible dog which have somewhat the appearance of ancient heathen household gods. There were also carpets for sale, but mostly over-staring in pattern, and of terrifically high prices.

We had brought with us a letter of introduction to a *ci-devant* Austrian officer settled here, and married to a daughter of Prince G——, one of the principal notabilities of the place, which introduction procured us a very pleasant invitation to dine with his family on the terrace overlooking the public gardens.

Our beautiful dark-eyed hostess, whose graceful *élancée* figure seemed made to show off to perfection all the fascinations of the national costume, was kind enough to dress expressly for my benefit before dinner, putting on a profusion of jewellery to heighten the effect of robes fit for Lalla Rookh or Princess Scheherezade. One can hardly wear too much jewellery with this attire: three jewelled belts, one adorned with turquoises, another with garnets, and a third with pearls and emeralds, were disposed across the hips one above the

other, like those worn in old Venetian paintings; several necklaces, forming a bewildering cascade of coral and amber over the bosom; a perfect wealth of bracelets; and more jewelled pins than I was able to count, held back a transparent veil, further secured by loose golden coins falling low on the forehead.

Her father, Prince G——, gave us some interesting details about the foundation of this promising colony, which is the only establishment of the sort in the kingdom. He himself was the principal moving spirit in its foundation, and it was owing to his persuasions chiefly that the King formed the resolution of founding a national watering-place, which, by becoming the resort of the Roumanian *noblesse*, would keep them at home, instead of spending their money at French or German baths.

Gladly would I have prolonged my stay in Roumania by some days, or even weeks; and it was tantalising to have to leave these attractive unknown regions after such a cursory glance. Still more so was it to be obliged to refuse a friendly invitation to return there to join a projected expedition of eight to ten days across the mountains, to be organised as soon as the weather had grown cooler. It was to be a large cavalcade — about twenty persons in all—the ladies in Roumanian

dress and riding in men's saddles. "Perhaps it is because of this you refuse," said my hostess. "I have heard that you English are always so very particular; but here everybody rides so—even the Queen herself has no other saddle."

I had, alas! no opportunity to correct this impression, by showing that an Englishwoman may be as enterprising as a Roumanian queen.

## CHAPTER L.

## UP THE MOUNTAINS.

"WHEN I was young, our mountains were still locked up," I was told by a gentleman native of the place, who accompanied me on my first mountain excursion in Transylvania. "Whoever then wanted to climb hills or to shoot chamois, had to travel to Switzerland to do so; and at school they used to teach us that there were no lakes in the country."

It is, in fact, only within the last half-dozen years that some attempt has been made to unlock the long range of lofty mountains which tower so invitingly over the Transylvanian plains, and render practicable the access to many a wild rocky gorge and secluded loch hitherto unknown save to wandering Wallachian shepherds. A most praiseworthy institution, somewhat on the principle of the Alpine Club, has been formed, thanks to whose energy suitable guides have been secured and rough shelter-

houses erected at favourable points. All this, however, is still in a very primitive state, and the difficulties and inconveniences attending a Transylvanian mountain excursion are yet such as will deter any but very ardent enthusiasts from the attempt. It is not here a question, as in Switzer-



*The Negoi—the highest mountain in Transylvania, 8250 feet.<sup>1</sup>*

land, of more or less hard walking or clambering before you can reach a good supper and a comfortable bed. Here the walking is often hard enough, but with this essential difference—that no supper, whether good or bad, can be obtained by any

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from Publication of the Transylvanian Carpathian Society.

amount of effort; and that the bed, if by good luck you happen to reach a hut, consists at best of a few rough boards with a meagre sprinkling of straw. You cannot hope to purchase so much as a crust of bread on your way, and the crystal water which gurgles in each mountain-ravine is the only beverage you will come across. Everything in the way of food and drink, as well as cooking utensils, knives, forks, cups, and plates, along with rugs and blankets for the night, must be carried about packed on baggage-horses. Therefore when a party consists of half-a-dozen members, and when the length of the expedition is to exceed a week, the caravan is apt to assume somewhat imposing proportions. Luckily, in the land beyond the forest prices are still moderate in the extreme, and without rank extravagance one may indulge in the luxury of two horses and one guide apiece. One florin (about 1s. 8d.) being the usual tax for a horse per diem, and the same for a man, the daily outlay thus amounts to five shillings only—a very small investment indeed for the enjoyment to be derived from a peregrination across the mountainous parts of the country. I have no doubt that all true lovers of nature will agree with me in thinking that precisely the rough and gipsy-like fashion in which these excursions are conducted forms their greatest charm, and that beautiful scenery is more thorough-

ly appreciated undisturbed by any seasoning of French-speaking waiters, *table d'hôte* dinners, and wire-rope tramways.

This way of travelling has, moreover, the incontestable advantage of being select, and escaping the inevitable discords which continually jar upon us when moving in a tourist-frequented country. What beautiful view does not lose half its charm if its foreground be marred by a group savouring of Cockneyfied gentility? Which magnificent echoes do not become vulgar when awakened by the shrieking chorus of a band of German students? Does not even a broken wine-bottle or a crumpled sheet of newspaper, betraying the recent presence of some other picnicking party, suffice to ruin miles of the finest landscape to an eye at all fastidious?

Here we may walk from sunrise to sunset without meeting other sign of life but some huge bird of prey hovering in mid-air above a lonely valley; and once accustomed to the daily companionship of eagles, one is apt to feel very exclusive indeed, and to regard most other society as commonplace and uninteresting.

From the moment we set foot on the wild hill-side, we have left behind us all the mean and petty conditions of everyday life. At least we have no other littlenesses to bear with than what



we bring with us ready made—our own stock-in-trade (which, of course, we cannot get rid of) and that of our chosen companions. Therefore, if I may offer a friendly piece of advice to any would-be mountaineer in these parts, let him look at his friends—not twice, but full twenty times at least—before he contemplates cultivating their uninterrupted society at an altitude of 6000 feet above sea-level. Indeed a Transylvanian mountain excursion is not a thing to be lightly entered upon out of simple *gaieté de cœur*, like any other pleasure-trip. It is a serious and solemn undertaking—almost a sort of marriage-bond—when you engage to put up, for better for worse, with any given half-dozen individuals during an equal number of days and nights. Like gold, they must previously have been tried by fire; and you will find very, very few people, even among your dearest friends, who, when weighed in the balance, will not be found wanting in one or other of the many qualifications which go towards making up a thoroughly congenial companion.

The pure ozone of these upper regions seems to act like the lens of a powerful microscope, bringing out into strong relief whatever is mean or paltry. Sweetly feminine airs and graces which have so entranced us in the ball-room, develop to positive monstrosities when transplanted to the mountain-

top; an intellect which amply sufficed for the requirements of small-talk on the promenade or at morning calls, shows pitifully barren when brought face to face with the majesty of nature; and a stock of amiability always found equal to the exigencies of conventional politeness, runs very soon dry under the unwonted strain of a genuine demand. As in the palace of truth in the fairy tale of Madame de Genlis, nothing artificial can here remain undiscovered. You can as little hope to hide your false chignon while camping out at night, as to conceal the exact quality of your temper; and defects of breeding will leak out as surely as the rain will leak in through the inferior fabric of a cheap waterproof cloak.

On the other hand, however, be it said, that many people who in town life have appeared dull and commonplace, now rise in value under the action of this powerful microscope; sterling qualities, whose existence we had never suspected, now come to light; and hidden delicacies of thought, which have had no room for expansion in the muggy atmosphere of conventionality, put forth unexpected shoots.

Such reflections are, nevertheless, but pointless digressions from the subject in hand, having nothing whatever to do with my own individual experi-

ences ; and present company being always excepted, I would have it distinctly understood that we were *all* amiable, *all* entertaining, *all* refined and noble-minded, when in the second week of September we started on one of these excursions,—a long-cherished wish of mine, whose execution had been hitherto baffled by the difficulty of finding suitable companionship.

Our party consisted of four gentlemen and two other ladies besides myself, and a six hours' drive had taken us from Hermanstadt to the foot of the hills, where horses and guides awaited us,—an imposing retinue of fully a dozen steeds and nearly as many men : the former starved puny-looking animals, weak and spiritless at first sight, but sure-footed as goats and with endless resisting power ; the latter wild uncouth fellows, with rolling black eyes and unkempt elf-locks, attired in coarse linen shirts, monstrous leather belts, and wearing the national *Opintschen* on their feet.

Our provisions and utensils were packed, according to the custom of the country, in double sacks made of a sort of rough black-and-white checked flannel, and these, along with our bundles of wraps, secured to the backs of the pack-horses,—a somewhat complicated business, as the weight requires to be extremely nicely balanced on either side.

It was wonderful to see how much could be piled up upon one small animal, which wellnigh disappeared beneath its bulky freight.

While this packing was going on we rested by the river-side, already enjoying a foretaste of the beauties in store for us. Dense beech-woods clothed the sides of the valley down to the water's edge, terminating as usual in a golden fringe of wild sunflowers standing out in broad relief from the dark background; clumps of bright-blue gentians and rosy rock-carnations were sprouting between the stones, and here and there the luxuriant trails of the wild hop hung down till they touched the water; a pair of water-ousels perched on opposite banks were making eyes at each other across the roaring torrent, and the deep quiet pools were occasionally stirred by the leap of a silvery trout.

At last we were told that all was ready; so mounting our riding-horses, we commenced the ascent. The saddles were the usual rough Hungarian wooden ones, only softened by a plaid or rug strapped over. Side-saddles are here useless, as the horses cannot be tightly girthed for climbing, and are not accustomed to the one-sided weight; so the only way to ride with comfort and safety is to imitate the example of the Roumanian Queen. A very little contrivance about the cos-

tume is all that is necessary in order to sit comfortably on a man's saddle; but I found the unwonted position rather trying at first, and sought occasional relief by sitting sidewise, using the high wooden prominence in front as the pommel of a lady's saddle. However, I soon relinquished these experiments, having very nearly come to serious grief from the saddle turning abruptly, which undoubtedly would have landed me on my head had I not extricated myself by a frenzied evolution. After this experience I thought it wiser to tempt fate no further and meekly resign myself to the degradation of a temporary change of sex.

On this particular occasion, however, I did not for long tax the powers of my steed, it was so much pleasanter to walk up the mountain-path step by step, and enjoy at close quarters all the wonders of the forest.

For upwards of two hours our way led us through splendid beech-woods richly carpeted with every species of ferns and mosses, an endless vista of shining grey satin and soft emerald velvet. Then by-and-by the first shy irresolute fir-tree appears on the scene, like a bashful rustic strayed unawares into the presence of royalty. The tall majestic beeches look down contemptuously on the puny intruder; for, like ancient monarchs fallen asleep on

their throne, they do not conceive it possible that their reign should ever come to an end.

“What means this rough interloper?” they seem disdainfully to ask, as they nod in the evening breeze. “Are not we the sole lords in these realms? What seeks this insolent upstart in our royal presence?”

But scarcely have we gone a hundred paces farther, than again we meet the intruding pine, larger and stronger this time; nor is he alone, for he has brought with him a motley group of his prickly brethren. Onward they press from all sides, impudently sprouting up at the very feet of the indignant beeches—their rough green arms ruthlessly brushing against the delicate grey satin of those shining pillars, trampling down the emerald velvet of the carpet, like revolutionary peasants broken into a palace.

The lordly beeches make a last effort to assert their supremacy, but the limits of their kingdom are reached: the sharp wind sweeping over the mountain-top, making them shake with impotent rage, is too keen for their delicate constitutions. They dwindle away, perish, and—die, leaving the field to their hardier foe.

And now King Pine has it all his own way. *Le roi est mort. Vive le roi!* A minute ago we had been revelling in the beauties of the beech-forest,

and now, courtier-like, we find ourselves thinking that the pine-woods are more beautiful yet by far. What can be more exquisite than those feathery branches trailing down to the mossy carpet? what more glorious than those straight-grown stems, each one erect and strong, worthy to be the mast of a mighty ship? what scent more intoxicating than the perfume they breathe forth?

Our reflections are presently broken in upon by a scramble close at hand. One of our baggage-horses has trod upon an underground wasp's-nest, which intrusion having been duly resented by the indignant insects, the horse takes to kicking violently, and finally rolls down the wooded incline, scattering our baggage as he goes. Luckily nothing is lost or damaged, and after a little delay, the fugitive being captured and re-laden, we are able to proceed on our way. A little more climbing, and then at last the forest walls uncloze, and we stand on an open meadow of short-tufted grass, where is built the rough wood hut which is to give us shelter. To the right and left the pine-woods slope upwards, their shadowy outlines gradually losing themselves in the fast-gathering twilight; and in front, at a distance of some five hundred yards, is a wall of rock overwashed by a foaming cascade, whose music has been growing on our ears during the last few minutes.

The horses are relieved of their respective burdens and set loose to graze; neither hay nor oats have been provided, nor do they expect it. Our Wallachian guides busy themselves in collecting firewood and kindling a large camp-fire, for the triple purpose of cooking the supper, keeping themselves warm, and scaring off possible bears or wolves that may come prowling about at night in quest of a horse. There is here no difficulty in providing firewood enough for a splendid bonfire, and no tree burns with such spirit as a dead fir-tree.

It is my duty here to forestall all possible anticipation, by frankly acknowledging that no bear ever did come to disturb us on this occasion. Yet the thought of the shaggy visitor who might at any moment be expected to drop in upon us, went a long way towards enhancing the romance of the situation. During our whole stay in the mountains, bruin was like a vague intangible presence hovering around, and causing us delicious thrills of horror at every step. If we plucked a branch of late raspberries on our path, it was with a trembling hand, lest a furry paw should appear at the other side of the bush to claim its rightful property; and we lay down to rest half expecting to be wakened by an angry growl close at hand. Consequently the raspberries we ate and the sleep we snatched were sweeter far than common rasp-



berries and everyday sleep, feeling, as we almost got to do, as though each had been fraudulently extorted from the bear.

Our shelter-hut, roughly put together of boards, consisted of a small entrance-lobby with stamped earth floor, and of one moderate-sized room about six paces long. All down one side, occupying fully half the depth of the apartment, ran a sort of shelf covered with straw, supposed to act as bed, where about a dozen persons might have room lying side by side. A long deal-table, a wooden bench, and a row of pegs for hanging up the clothes, completed the furniture. Besides the wooden shutters, there were movable glass windows, which were regularly deposited in a hiding-place under the footboards, lest they should be wantonly broken by the all-destroying Wallachians. Each authorised guide only is apprised of their place of concealment, to which he is careful to restore them when the party breaks up.

This particular shelter-hut is an exceptionally well-built and luxurious one, most such being devoid of windows, and often closed on one side only.

By the time we had prepared our supper and cheered ourselves with numerous cups of excellent tea, it had grown quite dark, and we were thankful to seek our hard couches. A railway rug spread

over the straw-covered boards rendered them quite endurable, and all superfluous coats and jackets were pressed into the pillow service. Everybody lay down in their clothes, merely removing the boots; for it is hardly possible to dress too warmly for a night passed in these Carpathian shelter-huts. And despite the day having been so warm as to necessitate the thinnest summer clothing for walking, the nights were piercingly cold, and even a heavy fur sledging-cloak was not superfluous.

Though the splash of the waterfall and the tinkling bell of a grazing horse were the only sounds which broke the stillness of the night, yet our unwonted surroundings did not allow of much uninterrupted slumber. But it is surprising to note to what a very minimum the necessary dose of sleep can be reduced on such occasions; the body, renovated as by a magic potion, seems unaccountably delivered from all physical weakness; even the sore throat we had brought with us from the lower world has vanished in the pure atmosphere of the upper regions.

## CHAPTER LI.

## THE BULEA SEE.

NEXT morning we proceeded to the real object of our excursion, the Bulea See, a lake which lies at the foot of the Negoi, 6662 feet above the sea-level, and situated about three hours distant from our shelter-hut.

There was a steep climb till we had reached the top of the waterfall, and then we found ourselves in a second valley, larger and wider than the first, and of a totally different character. Here were neither moss nor ferns, neither beech nor pine woods—only a deep and lonely valley shut in by pointed rocks on either side, and thickly strewn throughout with massive boulder-stones, each of which would seem to mark the resting-place of a giant. The only form of vegetation here visible, besides the short scraggy grass sprouting in detached patches betwixt the stones, were the stunted irregular fir-bushes (called *Krummholz*),

which, blown by ever-recurring gales into all sorts of fantastic shapes, resemble as many wizened goblins playing at hide-and-seek among the giant tombstones, crawling and creeping into every hollow which can afford them shelter from the inclemency of the winter storm ; for now we have entered a third kingdom, and the reign of the pine-tree is at an end. Having once overpassed the height of 1800 metres (5905½ feet), above which fir-trees do not thrive, these once stalwart and overbearing giants have degenerated to the misshapen and crooked goblins we see.

Yet here again we are forced to acknowledge this new metamorphosis to be but another step in the scale of loveliness. We had been enchanted by the beech-woods, ravished by the pine-forest, yet now all at once we feel that with the desolate wildness of these upper regions a yet higher note of beauty has been struck ; for here Nature, seeming to disdain such toilet artifices as trees or ferns or cunningly tinted mosses, like a classical statue boldly reveals herself in her glorious nudity, with nought to distract the eye from the perfection of her sublime curves.

Something of the charm of this desolate stony valley lay no doubt, for me, in its marked resemblance to Scottish scenery, recalling to my mind some of the wilder parts of Arran, the upper half

of Glen Rosa or portions of Glen Sannox, seen long ago but never forgotten, and for a moment I experienced the pleasurable sensation of recognising the face of a beloved old friend in a strange picture-gallery.

The fierce barking of dogs aroused me from my comparisons, and now for the first time I perceived that at one place the large loose stones had been piled together so as to form a rude sort of hovel or cavern, the headquarters of some shepherds come hither to find pasture for their flocks during the brief mountain summer.

We approached the *Stina*, as these *bergeries* are called, and made acquaintance with the shepherd, some of the gentlemen at my request cross-questioning him as to his habits and occupation. He was ready enough to enter into conversation with us; and our guide seemingly rejoiced at the sight of other human beings, after a long period of isolation. We learnt from him that the shepherds are in the habit of coming up here each summer about the end of June, to remain till the middle of September, after which date snow may be expected to set in, and the shepherd, proceeding southward as the year advances, leads his flocks into Wallachia and Moldavia to pass the winter. These flocks are not the property of one individual, but each village inhabitant has his particular sheep

marked with his own sign. All the mountain-pastures in these parts belong to a Count T——, who receives 45 kreuzers (about 9d.) per sheep for its summer pasturage.

This particular flock consisted of about 800 head, herded by four shepherds only, and six or eight large wolf-dogs. The men receive 30 florins (£2, 10s.) yearly wages, besides a pair of sandals each, and a certain proportion of food, principally maize-flour, to be cooked into *mamaliga*, and whatever cheese and sheep's milk they require. These wages are considered high enough in these parts, but the work required is hard and fatiguing. The whole day the shepherd must creep along the crags with his flock, at places where scarce a goat would obtain footing, and at night he must sleep in the open air whatever be the weather, ready to spring up at the slightest alarm of wolf or bear.

"When did you last see a bear?" inquired our interpreter of the solitary shepherd.

"This very night, *dommu*" (master), he replied, "the *ursu* came prowling about the camp, and had to be driven away by the dogs. Most nights he does come, and four of my sheep has he carried off this year. Not one of our dogs but what has been torn or wounded by him in turn."

"And where are your sheep at present?" was

the next question, as we looked round at the deserted camp.

The man pointed upwards and uttered a shrill unearthly cry, which presently was repeated as by an echo coming from the topmost ledges of the crags overhead; and there, looking up to where the jagged peaks were sharply defined against the blue sky, we could see the white sheep clinging all over the face of the precipitous cliffs like patches of new-fallen snow. It was wonderful to see how these seemingly senseless animals obey the slightest call of their shepherd, who by the inflections of his voice alone, guides them in whatever direction he pleases; and it is almost incredible that out of a flock of 800 sheep the shepherd should be able to recognise and identify each separate animal.

When we came to see those sheep at close quarters later in the day, we were surprised at the whiteness and fine quality of their wool—each single animal looking as though it had been freshly washed and carefully combed out, like the favourite poodle of some fine lady, and presenting therein a striking contrast to the flocks down below on the plains, whose appearance is dirty and unkempt. This superior toilet of the mountain-sheep seems due to the constant mists and vapours ever flitting to and fro in these upper regions, which thus enact

the parts of cleansing spirits ; but why, when they are about it, do not these benevolent *Kobolds* wash the shepherd as well ?

Besides the dogs there is usually a donkey attached to each shepherd's establishment. It serves to carry the packs of cheese and milk, or the heavy *bunda* (sheepskin coat) of the shepherd, and follows the flock about wherever its legs permit. On this occasion we met the inevitable ass some few hundred yards farther up the valley, standing on one of the giant tombstones, and with head thrown back, loudly braying up in the direction of the mountain-heights. He too had caught sight of his beloved sheep scrambling so far out of reach up there, and weary of his loneliness, was thus passionately entreating his eight hundred sweet-hearts to return to his faithful side.

Two hours more up the lonely valley brought us to our destination. There was one last rocky wall to be overcome, and having scaled it, we stood with panting breath before the Bulea See, a curiously suggestive little loch, dark greenish-blue in colour, which nestles in the stony chalice formed by the rocks around.

Nothing but grey boulder-stones lying here cast about ; no plant save the deadly monk's-hood growing rank in thick short tufts of deep sapphire hue ; no sign of life but one solitary falcon soaring over-



head, and some scattered feathers lying strewn at the water's edge.<sup>1</sup>

The brooding melancholy of this solitary spot has a charm all its own. This would be the place indeed for a life-sick man to come and end his days, and if there be such a thing as a voluptuous suicide, methinks these were the proper surroundings for it. Death must come so swiftly and so surely in those still green waters; which have such an insinuating glitter; no danger here of being saved and brought back to unwelcome life by a meddlesome log of floating wood, or the officious arm of an outstretched branch. Everything here seems to breathe of the very spirit of suicide; the cold green waters, the deadly monk's-hood, the hovering falcon, all seem to agree, "This is the end of life—come here and die!"

But let the hapless wretch bent on leaving this world beware of looking round once more before executing his resolve, for if he but turn and gaze again at the magnificent panorama at his feet, he will assuredly be violently recalled to life.

I do not recollect having seen any single view which in its glorious variety ever impressed me as much as what I saw that day, looking from the

<sup>1</sup> These feathers, of a bluish colour, we identified as those of the Garrulous Roller, *Coracias garrula*; and as this bird is never to be found at the aforementioned height, it must apparently have been crossing the mountains to migrate southwards, when its travelling arrangements were disturbed by the watchful falcon.

platform beside the Bulea See : neither a framed-in picture nor yet a bird's-eye view, it rather gave me the feeling as though I were standing at the head of a giant staircase whose balustrades are formed by the nicked-out peaks of the crags on either side, and whose separate steps present as many gradations of variegated beauty.

Close to our feet lay the stony valley we had just been traversing, with its gigantic tombstones and wizened dwarf bushes, and the flashing crest of the waterfall, just visible like a silver thread, at the farthest point. Then after a sudden drop of several hundred feet our eye lights upon the pine-valley, with the shelter-hut where we had passed the previous night. With a telescope we could just make out the place of the camp-fire and the figures of some grazing horses. Of the third step of this giant ladder—namely, the beech-forest—we could only see the billowy tops of the close-grown trees, a mass of waving green, touched here and there by the hand of autumn into russet and golden tints ; then far, far below lay stretched the smiling plain, streaked with occasional dark patches we knew to be forests, and sundry white dots we guessed at as villages, and the serpentine curves of the river Alt, winding like a golden ribbon between them.

A long bank of clouds which had been hovering

over the plain now sank down, gradually obscuring that part of the view ; but not for long. This was but another freak of nature, one more turn in the kaleidoscope, for now the mist has sunk so low that the plain itself appears above it, and we behold the landscape framed in the clouds, like a delusive *Fata Morgana*.

This is indeed a picture never to weary of, and after gazing at it for ten ecstatic minutes, I defy the life-sick man to turn away and carry out his suicidal intentions. The cold green waters have lost their attraction for him, and the spell of the deadly monk's-hood is broken ; for another voice whispers in his ear, and it tells him of life and of hope : a few minutes ago he had felt like a condemned criminal in sight of his grave, but now with this glorious world at his feet he is fain to think himself monarch of all he beholds.

The giant's ladder contains one more step, for by scrambling up the rocks at one side of the loch, one may reach the crest of the mountains, and walking there for hours on the confines of Roumania, gain an extensive view into both countries.

This is what some of the gentlemen of our party did, in hopes of coming across chamois ; while the rest of us remained below, well content with what we had achieved, settling down, not to suicide, but to such healthier if more commonplace

pursuits as luncheon and sketching. At least the luncheon was eaten and the sketch was begun; but beginning and finishing are two very different things in these regions, and one cannot reckon without the mountain-sprites, who were this day mischievously inclined.

A tiny white cloudlet, snowy and innocent-looking as a tuft of swan's-down, had meanwhile detached itself from the bank of clouds below the plain, and was speeding aloft in our direction. Incredibly fast this mountain-sprite ascended the giant staircase—gliding over the space it had taken us three hours to traverse, in not the tenth part of that time; jumping two steps at once, it seemed in its malicious haste to spoil our pleasure. Now it has reached the terrace where we are sitting; we feel its cold breath on our cheek, and in another minute it has thrown its moist filmy veil over the scene. The lake at our side has disappeared; we cannot see ten paces in front, and we shiver under the warm wraps we just now despised.

The mist, which feels at first like a soft invisible rain, gradually becomes harder and more prickly; there is a sharp rattling sound in the air, and we realise that we are sitting in a hailstorm, from which we vainly try to escape by dodging under the overhanging rocks.

As quickly as it came it is gone again, for scarce

ten minutes later the sun shone out triumphant, dispersing the ill-natured vapours. Yet a little longer will the sun lord it up here as master, and come victorious out of all such combats; but these impish cloudlets are the outrunners of the army of the dread ice-king, and will return again day by day in greater numbers, soon to be no more driven away from these regions.

## CHAPTER LII.

## THE WIENERWALD—A DIGRESSION.

I SHALL never forget the shock to my feelings when, shortly after leaving Transylvania, I went to spend the summer months in the much-famed Wienerwald near Vienna. In former years I had often visited this neighbourhood, and had even retained of it very pleasant recollections; but now, fresh from the wild charm of undefiled and undesecrated nature, the Wienerwald and everything about it appeared in the light of a pitiable farce. In fact I do not think I had ever rightly appreciated the Transylvanian mountain-scenery till forced to compare it with another landscape.

The country about Vienna—of which its natives are so proud—is beautiful, it is true, or rather it has been beautiful once; but alas! how much of its charm has been destroyed by that terrible *Verschönerungs Verein* (Beautifying Association), as those noisome institutions are called, loathsome

abortions of a diseased German brain, which have the object of teaching unfortunate mankind to appreciate the beauties of nature in the only correct fashion authorised by science.

Viewed in the abstract, an ignorant stranger unacquainted with the habits of the country might be prone to imagine taking a walk up any of those beautiful wooded hills to be a comparatively simple matter, provided his lungs and his *chaussure* be in adequate walking trim. Ridiculous error! to be speedily rectified by painful experience before you have spent many days in the neighbourhood of the Austrian capital. It is here not a question of boots, but of books; of science, not of soles; your lungs are useless unless your mind be rightly adjusted; and the latest edition of Meyer's 'Conversations Lexicon' will be far more necessary to fit you for a walk in the Wienerwald than a pair of Euknemida walking-shoes.

To go into a civilised Austrian forest requires at least as much preparation as to enter a fashionable ball-room; and unless you have been thoroughly grounded in contemporary literature, general history, and the biographies of celebrated men, you had far better stay at home.

There you are not left to yourself to make acquaintance with trees and flowers, as your ignorant rustic fashion has hitherto been; but your exact

relations to the botanical world around you are precisely defined from the very outset. At every step you make you are overwhelmed with alternate doses of advice, admonition, entreaty, or threat; but never, never by any chance are you left to your own devices! You cannot feel as if you were alone even in the most hidden depths of the forest, for the tormenting spirit of the *Verschönerungs Verein* will insist on following you about step by step, its jarring voice ever breaking in on your most secret reveries. It *warns* you not to tread on the grass; it *entreats* you to spare the pine-cones; it *instructs* you to avoid meddling with the toadstools; it *recommends* the flowers to your protection; it *advises* you to be careful with your cigar-ashes; it *commands* you to muzzle your unhappy terrier; it weighs you down with a crushing sense of your own unworthiness by appealing to your sense of honour, of probity, of refinement, of patriotism, and to a hundred other noble qualities you are acutely conscious of *not* possessing; then passing from fawning flattery to brutal menace, it growls dark threats against your liberty or your purse, should you have remained deaf to its hateful voice, and presume to have overstepped the limits of familiarity prescribed towards an oak-tree or a bush of wild-rose.

If, chafing in spirit at these reiterated pinpricks,



you would take some rest by sitting down on one of the numerous benches placed there for the accommodation of exhausted but perfectly educated individuals, you are abruptly called upon to choose between Goethe and Schiller, Kant or Hegel, Lessing or Wieland, to the immortal memory of each of which celebrities the proud monument of six feet of white-painted board has been dedicated.

A harmless enough looking little bridge is designated as Custozza bridge, and a delicious opening in the forest redolent of wild cyclamen desecrated by the base appellation of *Philosophen Wiese* (Philosopher's meadow). Even the source where you pause to slake your thirst has been christened by some such preposterous title as the fountain of friendship or the spring of gratitude. You cannot, in fact, move a hundred yards in any given direction without having the names of celebrated men, cardinal virtues, or national victories forced down your throat *ad nauseam*, and—what to my thinking is the cruellest grievance of all—you are there debarred the simple satisfaction of losing your way in a natural unsophisticated manner, every second tree having been converted into a sign-post, which persists in giving information you would much rather be without.

Latitude and longitude are dinned into your ears with merciless precision ; staring patches of

scarlet, blue, and yellow paint, arranged to express a whole series of cabalistic signs, disfigure the ruddy bronze of noble pine-stems; gaunt pointing fingers, multiplied as in a delirious nightmare, meet you at every turn, informing you of your exact bearings with regard to every given point of the landscape within a radius of ten miles. "Two hours from Bürgersruhe," they tell you; "Five from Wienerlust;" "An hour and a half from Philister Berg,"—and oh, how many weary miles away from anything resembling nature and freedom, eagles and poetry!

You long to be gone from the mournful spectacle of nature profaned and debased; your independent spirit chafes and frets under the oppressive tyranny of a vulgar despot, who, not content with directing your movements and restricting your actions, would further extend his detested interference to the inmost regions of your thoughts and feelings. Why should I be confronted with Hegel, when I wish to cultivate the far more congenial society of an interesting stag-beetle? Wherefore disturb the luxurious feeling of gloomy revenge my soul is brooding, by the suggestion of any sentiment as sickly and as utterly fabulous as friendship or gratitude? Why dishonour the fragrance of pale cyclamen by a bookworm odour of mustiness and mildew? Why, O cruel *Verschönerungs Verein*,

skilful annihilator of all that is beautiful and sublime, have you left no margin for poetry or imagination, romance or accident, conjecture or hope, in visiting these regions? "*Lasciate ogni speranza voi ch' entrate*" it is indeed the case here to say; or rather, if you be wise, do not enter these hopeless regions at all, but turning your back on all such, go straight through to Transylvania, where you will find in profusion all those charms of which the Wienerwald has been so cruelly robbed!

## CHAPTER LIII.

## A WEEK IN THE PINE-REGION.

OUR quarters at the shelter-hut in the pine-valley were so satisfactory and its situation so delightful, that instead of remaining only two nights, as had been originally intended, we stayed there a whole week, exploring the valley in all directions, making sketches of the principal points, and collecting supplies of the rare ferns and mosses with which the neighbourhood abounded, along with the alpenrose, which we often discovered still flowering at sheltered places.

A thorough dose of nature enjoyed in this way acts like a regenerating medicine on a mind and body wearied and weakened by a long strain of conventionalities. It is refreshing merely to look round on a beautiful scene as yet untainted by the so-called civilising breath of man, who, too often attempting to paint the lily, invariably vulgarises when he seeks to improve the work of the Creator.

What unmixed delight to see here everything unspoilt and unadulterated, each tree and flower living out its natural life, or falling into beautiful decay, without having been turned aside from its original vocation, or distorted to an unnatural use to minister to some imaginary want of sensual,



*The Pine-Valley.*<sup>1</sup>

cruel, greedy, rapacious man ; to find one little spot where nature yet reigns supreme ; to be able to gaze around and say that those splendid fir-stems will *not* be cut up in a noisy saw-mill, nor yet defiled by vulgar paint ; those late scarlet strawberries hanging in coral fringes from pearl-grey

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from Publication of the Transylvanian Carpathian Society.

rocks, will *not* be sold at so much a pint and cooked into sickly jams ; those prickly fir-cones will *not* be abstracted from their rightful owners the red-coated squirrels, to adorn the tasteless verandah of some popular beer-house ; the swelling outlines of those glorious blue gentians will be flattened in *no* improved herbarium, nor those gorgeous butterflies invited to lay down their young lives to further the interests of science ; those brown leaping trout will, thank heaven, never, *never* figure on an illuminated *menu* card as *truites à la Chambord*, to flatter the palate of some dissipated sybarite ! The pure light of the north star alone will point out my direction, and neither Kant nor Hegel will rise from their graves to torment me here.

It is wonderful how soon one gets accustomed to roughing it, and doing without the comforts and luxuries of daily life, and it is delightful to discover that civilisation is only skin-deep after all. On the second morning it seemed no hardship to perform our toilet at a mountain-spring shrouded in a pine-tree boudoir ; empty bottles were very worthy substitutes for silver candlesticks ; and for brushing our dress and cleansing our boots, a wild Wallachian peasant quite as useful as a trained *femme de chambre*.

Dress and fashion, uniforms and coffee-houses,

the wearisome chit-chat of a little country town, as well as the intricacies of European politics, had all passed out of our lives as though they had never existed, leaving no regret, scarcely even a memory. It seemed hardly possible to believe that such useless and unnatural things as false hair, diamond ear-rings, military parades, cream-laid note-paper, calling-cards, sugar-tongs, intrigue, envy, and ambition existed somewhere or other about the world. Were there really other forms of music extant than the lullaby of the waterfall, and the wild pibroch of the wind among the fir-stems? other sorts of perfumes than the pine-wood fragrance and the breath of wild thyme?

While we were thus revelling in the pure ozone above, two emperors were meeting in some dull corner of the dingy earth below,<sup>1</sup> and all Europe was looking on and holding its breath in order to catch some echo of the royal syllables interchanged.

For our part, we completely skipped this page of European history, and felt none the worse of it. Everything changes proportion up here, and a real eagle becomes of far more absorbing interest than a double-headed one. We were virtually as isolated as though cast on a desert island in the Pacific; and but for one messenger despatched to assure us

<sup>1</sup> The meeting of the Emperors of Austria and Russia at Skiernevice in September 1884.

of the welfare of our respective families, we had no communication with the world we had left.

Here we had a hundred other sources of interest of more absorbing and healthier kind than the so-called pleasures we had left below. First there was the waterfall, a never-failing element of beauty and interest. It was delightful to sketch it, sitting on a moss-grown stone at the edge of the torrent; it was yet more delightful to clamber up to its base, and clinging on to a rock, receive the breath of its spray full on our face, and enjoy at close quarters the musical thunder of its voice. Not far from this was the place where, three years previously, the great avalanche had swept over the valley, felling prostrate every tree which came in its passage. All across one side of the glen and half-way up the opposite hill, can still be traced the ravaging march of the destroying forces; for here the woodman never comes with his axe, and each tree still lies prostrate where it was stricken down, like giant ninepins overthrown; and here they will lie undisturbed till they rot away and turn to soft red dust, mute vouchers of the terrible power of unchained nature. One felt inclined to envy the bears and eagles for this glorious sight, of which they alone can have been the fortunate spectators.

Another point of interest indicated by our guides was the bridge of fir-stems over a steep



ravine, where years ago a terrified flock of sheep, pursued by a bear in broad daylight, had leapt down over the precipitous edge, upwards of three hundred breaking their legs in their frenzied attempts to escape.

The shepherds who lived above in the stony valley came frequently down to our shelter-hut, and we used to find them comfortably ensconced at our camp-fire, in deep conversation with the guides. In their lonely existence it must have been a pleasant experience to have neighbours at all within reach, and our hospitable camp-fire was doubtless as good as a fashionable club to their simple minds. They brought us of their sheep's milk and cheese. The latter, called here *brindza*, was very palatable, and the milk much thicker and richer than cow's milk, but of a peculiar taste which I failed to appreciate.

There was a shepherdess, too, belonging to the establishment; but let no one, misled by the appellation, instinctively conjure up visions of delicate pastel-paintings or coquettish porcelain figurines, for anything more utterly at variance with the associations suggested by the names of Watteau and Vieux Saxe, than the uncouth, swarthy, one-eyed damsel who inhabited the *bergerie*, cannot well be imagined. The male shepherds were four in number — two of them calling

for no special description; the third, a boy of about fourteen, with large senseless eyes and a fixed idiotic stare, looked no more than semi-human. The most distinguished member of the party, and, as we ladies unanimously agreed, decidedly the flower of the flock, was a good-looking young man of some twenty years, with straight-cut regular features, a high brown fur cap, and a wooden flute on which he played in a queer monotonous fashion, resembling the droning tones of a bagpipe. He had come from Roumania, he told us, and had been for a time tending flocks in Turkey, where he had picked up something of the language. It was a curious country, he observed, and the people there had curious habits—such, for instance, as that of keeping several wives; the richer a man was, the more wives he kept. Our young shepherd shrugged his shoulders as he made this remark, in a supercilious manner, evidently of opinion that women were an evil which should not be unnecessarily multiplied; and certainly, judging from the solitary specimen of female beauty which the stony valley contained, no man could feel tempted to embark in a very extensive harem.

We afterwards ascertained that the interesting shepherd with the fur cap and wooden flute had committed a murder over in Roumania, and been obliged to fly the country on that account. This

disclosure rendered us somewhat more reserved in our intercourse with our romantic neighbour, and though we could not exactly put a stop to his visits, we avoided over-intimacy, and always felt more at ease in his society when there was a gun or revolver within handy reach.

Our Wallachian guides proved thoroughly satisfactory in every way—active, obliging, and full of inventive resources. They were very particular about keeping their fast-days as prescribed by the Greek Church, and would refuse all offers of food at such times. When not fasting, they were easily made happy by any scraps of cheese or bacon left over from our meals, or by a glassful of spirits of wine judiciously adulterated with water. On one occasion a parcel containing a dozen hard-boiled eggs, grown stale (to put it mildly) from having been overlooked, was received with positive rapture by one of these unsophisticated beings, who devoured them every one with a heartfelt relish not to be mistaken.

Ham, sausages, and bread and cheese, formed the staple of our nourishment in this as in other Transylvanian mountain-excursions—for after the first day, of course, no fresh meat could be procured. Also the Hungarian *Paprica Speck*—viz., raw bacon prepared with red pepper—is useful on these occasions, as it gives much nourishment in a very

small compass. I never myself succeeded in reaching the point demanded by Hungarian enthusiasm for this favourite national food ; so that all I can conscientiously say for it is that, given the circumstances of a keen appetite, bracing mountain-air, and no other available nourishment, it is quite eatable, and by a little stretch of indulgence might almost be called palatable. The Magyars, however, pronounce this bacon to be of such superlatively exquisite flavour, as only to be fit for the gods on a Sunday ! So I suppose it can only be by reason of some peculiarly ungodlike quality in my nature that I am unable to appreciate this Elysian dish as it deserves.

The Roumanians have, like the Poles, a certain inbred sense of courtesy totally wanting in their Saxon neighbours ; it shows itself in many trifling acts—in the manner they rise and uncover in the presence of a superior, and the way they offer their assistance over the obstacles of the path. One day that I had hurt my foot, and was much distressed at being unable to join a longer walk, I found in the evening a large nosegay of ripe bilberries, surrounded by red autumn leaves, lying at the foot of my sleeping-place—a delicate attention on the part of our head guide, who wished thereby to console me for the pleasure I had lost.

The peasants were always pitying us for the dis-

advantages of our *chaussure*: how could we be so foolish as to submit to the torture and inconvenience of shoes and stockings, instead of adopting the comfortable *Opintschen* they themselves wore? And they almost succeeded in persuading me to make the attempt on some future occasion, although I feel doubtful as to how far a foot corrupted by civilisation could be induced to adapt itself to this unwonted covering.

We celebrated our last evening in the pine-valley by ordering an extra large bonfire to be made. Accordingly three good-sized fir-trees were felled, and bound together to form a sort of pyramid. A glorious sight when the flames had scaled the heights, turning each little twig into a golden brand, and drawing a profusion of rockets from every branch—far more beautiful than any fireworks I had seen.

One of our guides, called Nicolaïa—the tallest and wildest-looking of the group—especially distinguished himself on this occasion. He had evidently something of the salamander in his constitution, for he seemed to be absolutely impervious to heat, and to feel, in fact, quite as comfortable inside the fire as out of it. By common consent he was generally assigned the part of cat's-paw, to him being delegated the office of taking a boiling pot off the fire or picking the roasted

potatoes from out the red-hot embers. Standing as he now was, almost in the centre of the glowing pile, supporting the burning fir-trees with his sinewy arms, while a perfect shower of sparks rained thickly down all over his ragged shirt and bare, tawny chest, it required no stretch of imagination to take him for a figure designed by Doré and stepped straight out of Dante's Inferno.

Our last morning came, and with heartfelt regret we prepared to leave the lovely valley where we had spent such a truly delicious week. An additional pack-horse having been sent for from the village below, we were surprised to see the animal in question make its appearance led by the Roumanian *curé* of the parish, who, having heard that a horse was required, had bethought himself of earning an honest penny by hiring out his beast and enacting the part of driver. Anywhere else it would be a strange anomaly to see a clergyman putting himself on a level with a common peasant, attired in coarse linen shirt and meekly carrying our bundles ; but here this is of everyday occurrence. The Roumanian peasant, however rigorously he may adhere to the forms of his Church, has, as I said before, no inordinate respect for the person of his clergyman, whose infallibility is only considered to last so long as he is standing before the altar ; once

outside the church walls, he becomes an ordinary man to his congregation, and not necessarily a particularly respected or respectable individual. This particular *popa* was, as it appeared, not only accustomed to serve as driver, but likewise as beast of burden himself—as he genially volunteered to carry all the mosses and ferns we collected on the way. I am ashamed to say that we basely accepted his services, and loaded him unmercifully with the spoils of the forest, thus unceremoniously apostrophising him : “ Here, *popa*, another hart’s-tongue ; ” or, “ Take this ivy trail, will you, ”—till he was wellnigh smothered in sylvan treasures.

Our path to the foot of the mountains, where our carriages were to await us, was a walk of about three hours ; but soon after starting, our sacerdotal porter having volunteered to show us a short cut which should take us down in two-thirds of that time, we gladly grasped at this proposition and at the prospect of seeing a new part of the forest ; and our other guides being on ahead with the horses, we blindly intrusted ourselves to the guidance of the holy man, who forthwith began to lead us through the very thickest forest-mazes, over rocks and torrents, through bogs and brier, up hill and down dale,—till our clothes were torn, our hands were bleeding, and our tempers were soured. “ The way must be very short, indeed, if

it is so bad," was the reflection which at first kept up our spirits; but we had yet to learn that brevity and badness do not always go hand in hand, and that an execrable path may be lengthy as well. Like jaded warriors overcome by the fatigue of an excessive march, we now disburdened ourselves of our rich spoils, having no further thought but to find our way from out this bewildering labyrinth of smooth beech-stems. Clumps of exquisite maidenhair ferns, but now so tenderly dug up, were callously cast aside, and the much-prized layers of velvety moss were brutally left to perish. All noble instincts seemed dead within us, our weary limbs and empty stomachs being all we cared for. The forest had suddenly grown hideous, and we wondered at ourselves for ever having thought it beautiful. The priest was a ruffian luring us on to our destruction. Utterly losing sight of his sacerdotal character, we abused him in harsh and vigorous language, which he meekly bore—I must say that much for him. Perhaps he had heard similar language before, and was accustomed to it.

Whether the *popa* had lost his way and did not wish to acknowledge it, or whether, as I rather suspect, he had never been in the forest before, remains an unsolved mystery—the result was, however, that after nearly seven hours of remarkably



hard walking we were still lost in the depths of the forest, and apparently no nearer our destination than when we had set out.

At this juncture one of the ladies lay down on the ground, declaring herself incapable of going a step farther. She was nearly fainting with fatigue and hunger, for all our provisions had been sent on with the horses. The predicament was a most unpleasant one; for although the *popa* swore for at least the twentieth time that we should arrive in less than half an hour, we had been too cruelly deceived, and our confidence in him was gone. Half an hour might just as well mean three or four hours further; and even if he spoke the truth, our unfortunate companion was far too much exhausted to proceed.

After a brief consultation we determined that, leaving two gentlemen in charge of the invalid, some of us should go on with the miscreant priest as guide, sending back a horse and some restoratives to the spot. This plan proved successful; for after about three-quarters of an hour more of clambering and climbing, we reached the forest-edge, and found our guides waiting for us and much perplexed at our non-appearance.

"The devil take the *popa*!" was their hearty and unanimous exclamation when we had related our adventure; "who could be fool enough to follow

the priest? Did we not know that it was bad luck even to meet a *popa*?" they asked us pityingly; and certainly, under the circumstances, we felt inclined for once to attach some weight to popular superstition, and inwardly to resolve never again to trust ourselves to the guidance of a Roumanian *popa*.

## CHAPTER LIV.

## LA DUS AND BISTRA.

THIS first taste of the delights of a Transylvanian mountain-excursion had but stimulated our desire for more enjoyment of the same kind. After revelling so unrestrainedly in the pure mountain-air, it was not possible to settle down at once to the monotony of everyday life. Some touch of the restless roving spirit of the gipsies had come over me, and I began to understand that the life they lead might have a fascination nowhere else to be found. I positively hungered for more air, more sunshine, for deeper draughts of the pine-wood fragrance, further revelations of the mountain wonders. I could not afford to waste the very last days of this glorious summer weather cooped up within narrow streets ; and as one or two of my late companions were of the same way of thinking, another expedition was speedily resolved upon.

It was, however, not without difficulty that we organised this second excursion, which could not

possibly be attempted by two ladies without at least an equal number of gentlemen. Especially if there were going to be any more fainting-fits, a second protector was an imperative necessity; and who could tell (women being proverbially incalculable in their doings) whether we might not both select the self-same moment for swooning away? As yet only one of the stronger sex had been secured, and a second seemed to be nowhere forthcoming. As I before remarked, it is no easy matter to find a person with exactly the requisite qualifications for a mountaineering companion, and I am inclined to believe that Diogenes must have been contemplating some such ascent when he ran about the streets of Athens with a lantern. We had gone over the list of our dearest friends, and had rejected most of them, feeling convinced that we should get to detest them in the course of the first forty-eight hours. Of those few who remained, some were unwell and others unwilling; some had no time and others no boots; the cavalry officers rarely cared to walk at all, and infantry officers were of opinion that they had quite enough walking already in their usual routine of military duty; and it is mournful to have to record that out of a population of about 22,000 inhabitants, not another man could be found both willing and able to walk up a hill with a couple of ladies.

Our plan, therefore, seemed doomed to dire disappointment, when a bright thought struck me—the very brightest I ever had. Besides the population of

13,000 Germans,

3,737 Roumanians,

2,018 Magyars,

238 Jews and Armenian Gipsies,

and 443 infants, shown by the latest statistical return of the town, Hermanstadt could boast of something else—namely,

ONE ENGLISHMAN,

and on this one solitary countryman all my hopes were accordingly fixed.

The gentleman in question, who had made his appearance here some months previously along with his wife and child, had long been a source of deep and perplexing interest to the inhabitants of Hermanstadt. None of them knew his name, and no name was required, “Der Engländer” being sufficient to describe the fabulous stranger who had found his way to these remote regions. No one spoke of him in any other way, and his bills and parcels were sent to him invariably addressed to “Der Engländer.” His wife and his hat, his umbrella and his stockings, his boots and his baby, were as many sources of puzzling conjecture to these worthy people, who regarded him with all

the deeper suspicion just because the life he led was so apparently harmless.

What had brought him to this out-of-the-way corner of Europe? was the question which troubled many a Saxon mind; and more than one was of opinion that he was a British spy sent by Mr Gladstone for the express purpose of studying the military resources of the country and corrupting the population. No one would, I think, have been much surprised if some dark crime had been brought home to him, or if a supply of nitroglycerine had been found concealed in the baby's perambulator,—the two most suspicious circumstances about him being, that he had occasionally been seen looking on at the military parade, and had an uncanny habit of taking long walks in the country. It was, however, precisely this last ominous symptom which had directed my thoughts to him on this occasion; and having formed a slight acquaintance with Mr P—— and his wife, I felt sure that he would prove equal to the occasion.

A deep analysis of international character has led me to the conclusion that, in a contingency like the present, one Englishman may be fairly balanced against a trifling majority of some twenty thousand other mixed races; so I put forward my candidate, expressing a conviction that my countryman would in no way fall short of the national

standard which demands that every Englishman shall do his duty.

"Very well," said my friend, half reluctantly, "let us ask 'Der Engländer,' if you really think it safe." So after I had pledged my honour that the country's security would in no wise be imperilled, I secured the valuable and agreeable companionship of Mr P——, and we set out once more, a small party of four people, with the requisite number of guides and baggage-horses.

This second expedition was to be conducted on a somewhat different principle from the first; for instead of taking up our quarters at one given point, we proposed wandering over the mountains in true gipsy fashion, sleeping wherever we happened to find shelter in shepherds' huts or foresters' lodges, or in the absence of these, camping under a sail-cloth tent we carried with us. It had been planned that we were to remain out fully ten days, returning by a different route, and making a short excursion into Roumania.

We drove to the foot of the hills, and then commenced our ascent from a Roumanian village, where the white-veiled women plying the distaff in front of their doors sent us courteous salutations as we passed. The weather was radiantly beautiful, the atmosphere of a faultless transparency, without a breath of air to hasten the falling leaves, or a cloud

to mar the effect of the deep-blue vault. There were still wild flowers enough—campanulas, gentians, and wild carnations—growing on the steep grassy slopes, to make us fancy ourselves in mid-summer; and the gaudy insects disporting themselves thereon—butterflies blue and purple, gold and scarlet grasshoppers, and shining bronze beetles—were as many brilliant impostors luring us on to the belief that winter was still far away.

But the furry caterpillars scuttling across our path at headlong speed, in their haste to wrap themselves up in their warm winter cocoons, knew better; and so did the ringdoves and martins, who, with other tribes of migrating birds, were all winging it swiftly towards the south, making dark streaks in the blue sky overhead.

For our part, we felt it almost too hot to walk up-hill in the sun, and were thankful when, after an hour's ascent, we gained the shade of the dense pine-forests which, without admixture of beech, clothe all this part of the country.

There is no sense of monotony in these beautiful pine-woods, though one may walk in them for many days without reaching the end of the forest, for no two parts of it are alike, and surprises await us at every turn. Thus one region is distinguished by a profusion of coral ornaments, the huge red toadstools, sprouting every-



where on the emerald moss, looking like monster sugar-plums which have fallen from these gigantic Christmas-trees; then suddenly a new transformation takes place, and we are walking in a mermaid's grove far beneath the sea—for are not the trees here adorned with tremulous hangings of palest green sea-weed? Yet this is no other than a lichen, the *Usnea barbata* or bearded moss, also called Rübezahl's hair, which with such strange perversity will sometimes seize upon a whole forest district, thus fantastically decking it out in this long, wavy fluff, hanging from each twig and branch in fringes and bunches like a profusion of grey-green icicles; while elsewhere, under apparently the self-same conditions of soil and vegetation, we may seek for it in vain.

Farther on we come upon a scene still more weird and suggestive, as we seem to have stepped unawares into a land of ghosts. Hundreds of dead fir-trees, bleached and dry, are standing here upright and stark. Untouched by the storm, and unbroken by old age, with every branch and twig intact, they have been stricken to the heart's core by a treacherous enemy, the *Borkenkäfer* (*Bostrichus typographus*), a small but baneful insect, which for years past has been plying its deadly craft, and, vampire-like, sapping their life away. It is a relief to quit this death-like region, and

return to the exuberant life expressed in every line of those gorgeous trees, growing scarce fifty paces ahead of their stricken brethren, whose lower branches, weighed down beneath the burden of their own magnificence, have sunk to the ground, where they lie voluptuously embedded in the rank luxuriance of the moss-woven grass. Yet here, too, the deadly insect will come in scarce half-a-dozen years, to turn those emerald giants into staring white ghosts. Day by day it is creeping nearer, and though they know it not, those deluded trees, their days are already counted. Let us pass on ; life is not blither than death after all !

Our first halt was made at La Dus, a small group of huts tenanted in summer by Hungarian gendarmes, there stationed for the purpose of keeping a look-out on smugglers and possible military deserters, who may hope to evade service by concealing themselves among the shepherds, or going over the frontier into Roumania. The immediate surroundings of this little establishment are somewhat bleak and desolate, the forest having been of late much cleared out at this spot. A tiny cemetery behind the houses seems to act the part of pleasure-ground as well ; for right in its centre, separating the seven or eight graves into two rows, is a primitive skittle-ground — which curious arrangement can only be explained by the supposi-

tion that here the skittles had the right of priority, the dead men being but dissipated interlopers, who, having loved to play at skittles during their lifetime, desired to be united to them even in death. The remains of a camp-fire I observed in one corner, was another sign of the peculiar way the defunct are treated in this obscure churchyard, the ashes on closer investigation showing the charred wrecks of some of the crosses and railings missing from more than one grave.

In a wooden *châlet* reserved for the occasional visits of inspection of a head forester we obtained night-quarters, proceeding next morning on our way, which again took us through similar pine-woods, reaching this time a comfortable shooting-lodge lying deep in the forest of Bistra, where we were made welcome by a hospitable Roumanian gamekeeper and four or five remarkably amiable pointers, who threatened to stifle us with their affectionate demonstrations.

The weather had now begun to change, and a small drizzling rain had already surprised us on the way. Reluctantly we acknowledged that the caterpillars were by no means so devoid of sense as had appeared at first sight; and those migrating winged families, which had seemed so unreasonably anxious to start for Italy, were now slowly rising in our estimation, and as we were very comfortably

installed at the gamekeeper's lodge, we resolved to stay there two nights in order to give the weather time to improve before venturing on to higher ground.

This intervening day of rest was spent pleasantly enough in walking about and sketching, despite occasional showers of rain; while the gentlemen proceeded to shoot *Haselhühner* in the forest. For the benefit of those unacquainted with these delicious little birds, I must here mention that they are about the size of a partridge, but of far superior flavour. They are mostly to be found in pine-forests, where they feed on the delicate young pine-shoots, along with juniper-berries, sloes, and heather-nibs, which gives to them (in a fainter degree) something of the sharp aromatic taste of the grouse.

Close to the gamekeeper's lodge there was a dashing mountain-torrent of considerable volume, and this point had been selected for the construction of a *Klause* (literally cloister)—or to put it more clearly, a monster dam—across the torrent-bed, with movable sluices. By means of the body of water obtained in this way, the wood of the forest is conveyed to the lower world. The river-banks are here enlarged till they form a small lake, and the dam, built up securely of massive boulder-stones, is, for greater preservation against

wind and weather, walled and roofed in with wooden planking, which gives to it the appearance of a roomy habitation. In connection with this lake are numerous wooden slides or troughs, which, slanting down from the adjacent hills, deposit whole trunks at the water's edge, there to be hewn up into convenient logs and thrown into the water. When a sufficient quantity of wood has been thus collected the sluices are opened, and with thunder-like noise the cataract breaks forth, easily sweeping its wooden burden along.

Even greater loads sometimes reach the lower world by this watery road, and occasionally twenty to twenty-five stems, roughly shaped into beams for building purposes, are fastened together so as to form a sort of raft, firmly connected at one end by cross-beams and wooden bands, but left loose at the opposite side to admit of the beams separating fan-like, according to the exigencies of the encountered obstacles, as they are whirled along. Two men furnished with lengthy poles act as steersmen, and it requires no little skill to guide this unwieldy craft successfully through the labyrinth of rocks and whirlpools which beset the river's bed. The perils of such a cruise are considerable, and used to be greater still before some of the worst rocks were blasted out of the way. Sometimes the whole craft goes to pieces dashed

against the boulders, or else a fallen tree-stem across the river may crush the sailors as they are swept beneath. From this fate the navigators may sometimes barely escape by throwing themselves prostrate on the raft, or by leaping over the barrier at the critical moment; or else, when the obstacle is not otherwise to be evaded, and seems too formidable to surmount, they find it necessary to make voluntary shipwreck by steering on to the nearest rock. The thunder-like noise of the cataract renders speech unavailing, so it is only by signs that the men can communicate with each other.

This particular *Klause* is not in use at present, as there are similar ones in neighbouring valleys; so the little colony of log-huts built for the accommodation of workmen is standing empty, and single huts can be rented at a moderate price by any one who wishes to enjoy some weeks of a delightful solitude in the midst of fragrant pine-forests.

## CHAPTER LV.

## A NIGHT IN THE STINA.

As on the second morning the rain had stopped, we thought we might venture to proceed on our way, the next station we had in view being the Jäeser See, a mysterious lake lying high up in the hills, of which many strange tales are told. This *Meeresauge* (eye of the sea, as all such high mountain-lakes are called by the people) is the source of the river Cibir, and believed by the country folk to be directly connected with the ocean by subterraneous openings. The bones of drowned seamen and spars from wrecked ships are said to have been there washed ashore; and popular superstition warns the stranger not to presume to throw a stone into its gloomy depths, as a terrible thunderstorm would be the inevitable result of such sacrilege. According to some people, the Jäeser See would be no other than the devil's own caldron, in which he brews the

weather, and where a dragon sleeps coiled up beneath the surface.

No wonder we felt anxious to visit such an interesting spot, and that we pressed onward without heeding the driving mists which every now and then obscured our view. We had now reached the extremity of the pine-region, and were walking along a mountain-shoulder where short stunted bushes of fir and juniper afforded shelter for countless *Krametsvögel* (a sort of fieldfare), which flew up startled at our approach, uttering shrill, piercing cries. Several birds were shot as we went along; but as we had no dog to seek them out, they were mostly lost in the thick undergrowth where they had fallen.

The sun had now hidden itself, and a sharp piping wind was blowing full in our faces. We struggled on manfully notwithstanding, for some time, in face of discouragement; but when at last the mist had turned to a driving snowstorm, blinding our eyes and catching our breath, we forcedly came to a standstill, to consider what next was to be done. There was no shelter to be obtained by going on, as our guides explained: even did we succeed in reaching the lake, which was doubtful in this weather, there was neither hut nor hovel near it, nor for many miles around, and we ruefully acknowledged that our much-vaunted sail-cloth



tent would afford but scanty shelter against such a storm as was evidently coming on. It was too late to think of returning to the forester's lodge, being near four o'clock, and darkness set in soon after six. By good luck, as we happened to remember, we had passed a seemingly deserted shepherd's hut about half an hour previously, the only habitation we had seen that day. By retracing our steps we might at least hope to pass the night under cover.

It proved no such easy matter, however, to find the place in question, for the heavy mists which accompanied the snowstorm enveloped us on all sides as with a veil, and we could not distinguish objects only twenty paces off; and although the hut stood out upon an open slope of pasture, we passed it close by without suspecting, more than once. At last, despatching a guide to ascertain the exact bearings, we waited till his welcome shout informed us that our place of refuge was found, and a few minutes later we had reached the Stina.

This hut, very roughly put together of logs and beams, had been evacuated by the shepherds some ten days previously; its walls were very low, the roof disproportionately high; there were no windows, and none were required, for there were as many chinks as boards, and fully more holes than

nails about the building, and these, in freely admitting the wind and the rain, furnished enough daylight to see by as well. Yet such as it was, it was infinitely better than our flimsy tent, and we felt heartily thankful for the shelter it afforded.

The hut inside was divided off into two compartments, one for living and sleeping, the other a sort of storeroom where the shepherds are in the habit of keeping their milk and cheeses. Some rude attempt at furnishing had also been made; one or two very primitive benches, some slanting boards to serve as beds, and a rickety table, weighted down by stones to keep it together. Bunches of dried juniper were stuck at regular intervals along the eaves of the roof inside by way of decoration; perhaps, also, as a charm to keep the lightning away. Some little objects carved out of wood, knives, spoons, &c., came likewise to light in our course of investigation.

There was no such thing as a fireplace or chimney, but a heap of grey wood-ashes in the centre of the stamped earth-floor testified that a fire could be made notwithstanding, and only the patient smoke of many summers could have polished those beams inside the hut into that shiny surface of rich brown hue.

We took the hint, and presently the welcome sight of dancing flames lit up the scene. At first

a dense smoke filled the building, and there seemed really no choice between freezing and suffocation, when some inventive spirit bethought himself of knocking out a portion of the roof by means of a long pole, and so making an improvised chimney. The current of air thus effected instantaneously carried off the dense smoke-clouds, and left the atmosphere comparatively clear.

Like fire-fly swarms the sparks flew upwards, probing the mysterious darkness of the cavernous roof; and now as the blast swept by outside, shaking the walls and fanning the flames to an angry growl, the dead wood-ashes were likewise stirred to life, and, wafted aloft in the guise of fluttering white moths, they joined in a whirling dance with the golden fire-flies.

We had suspended our drenched cloaks from the cross-beams near the fire, and were beginning to prepare our supper, when a startling interruption gave a new current to our thoughts. One of the guides who had been collecting firewood outside now rushed in, exclaiming—"A bear! a bear! There is a young bear up there among the rocks."

Breathless we all hurried to the door, and Count B—— seized his gun, trembling with joyful anticipation, and almost too much agitated to load. The snowstorm had momentarily relaxed its violence, and there, sure enough, on the rising

ground a little above the hut, we espied a black and shaggy animal gazing at us furtively from over a large boulder-stone. It could be nothing else but a bear.

With palpitating hearts we watched the huntsman steal upwards till within shot, terrified lest the bear should take alarm too soon. But no; this was not the sort of disappointment in store for us! The animal let itself be approached till within a dozen paces; it was a perfectly ideal bear in all respects, coming as it seemed with such obliging readiness to be shot at our very threshold.

Delusive dream! too beautiful to last! One moment more and the shot would be fired; we held our breath to listen—and then—oh, woful disappointment!—the gun was lowered, and the would-be bear-hunter called out in heart-rending accents, “It is only a dog!”

Only a poor half-starved dog, forgotten by the shepherds on their descent into the valley, and which probably had been prowling round the hut ever since in hopes of seeing his masters return. The animal was shaggy and uncouth in the extreme, gaunt and wild-looking from hunger, with glaring yellow eyes which gazed at us piteously from out its bushy elf-locks. Even at a very short distance the resemblance to a bear was striking.

We called the poor outcast, and would fain have

given him food and shelter ; but he was scared and savage, and misunderstanding our benevolent intentions, could not be persuaded to approach. We had therefore to content ourselves with throwing food from a distance, which he stealthily devoured whenever he thought himself unobserved.

After this bitter disappointment we returned to the hut, and there made ourselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit, completing our cooking arrangements, not without a sigh of regret for the delicate bear's-paws we had just now been expecting to sup upon ; though a brace of *Haselhühner* shot the previous day in the Bistra forest, and now roasted on a spit, gave us no cause to complain of the quality of our food.

Our next care was to prepare our sleeping-couches, for here there was not even a sprinkling of straw to soften the hard boards. Luckily these forests contain an endless supply of patent spring mattresses, and a few armfuls of fresh-cut fir-branches, with a rug spread over, makes as good a bed as any one need desire. A Scotch plaid (my faithful companion for many years) hung along the wall kept off the worst draughts, and a roaring fire sustained the whole night prevented us from perishing with cold. Our sleeping-boards were close alongside this improvised hearth, with barely room enough to pass between without singeing

one's clothes; yet while our faces were roasting, our backbones were often as cold as ice, so it became necessary to turn round from time to time when in imminent danger of getting overdone at one side. Opposite us slumbered the guides, taking turns to sit up and tend the fire.

Many a massive log was burnt that night, and not only trunks and branches, but much of the rustic furniture as well, was pressed into service as fuel. The shepherds will require to furnish their house anew next summer.

It was late ere sleep came to any of us, and when it came at last it brought strange phantoms in its train; visions of ghosts and sorcerers, of bears and bandits, flitted successively through our brain; and scarcely less strange than dreamland was the reality to which we were occasionally roused by alternate twinges of cold and heat—the smouldering fire at our elbow, the slumbering guides, and the white moths and fire-flies whirling aloft in the frenzied mazes of a wild Sabbath dance, to which the moaning wind, like the wailing voice of some unquiet spirit, played a mournful accompaniment.

When morning came we reviewed our situation dispassionately. The storm was over, and the day, though dull, was fair as yet; but the horizon was clouded, and some peasants coming by told us of

snow lying deep on the mountains we were bound for. We could no longer blind ourselves to the fact that summer was over, and that the troublesome mists, which but a fortnight ago could easily be dispersed by the sun's disdainful smile, were now the masters up here.

It was clearly impossible to proceed farther under the circumstances ; so remembering that discretion is often the best part of valour, we resolved to cut short our expedition, postponing all further explorations to a more favourable season.

When our little caravan was set in motion, I turned round to take a last look at the hut which had sheltered us, and which most likely I shall never see again. There, motionless on a neighbouring rock, crouched the gaunt figure of the hungry dog, gazing intently before him. Then, as I watched, he crept stealthily down till he had reached the half-open door of the empty Stina, where, after a cautious investigation to assure himself of the coast being clear, he entered, and was lost to my sight. Doubtless he thought to warm himself by the fire we had left, and to discover some food-scrap remaining from our meals.

That dog haunted my thoughts for many days afterwards, and I could not refrain from speculating on its fate, which can only have been a tragic one. Did it perish of cold and hunger, or else fall a prey

to the wild beasts of the forest? After having but yesterday unconsciously enacted the part of the bear, perhaps Bruin himself came to fetch it on the morrow. It would, after all, have been more merciful if the error had lasted a little longer, and a kindly bullet been lodged in its unsuspecting heart!



## CHAPTER LVI.

FAREWELL TO TRANSYLVANIA—THE ENCHANTED  
GARDEN.

So the end of our Transylvanian sojourn had actually come, and like many things whose prospect appears so unconditionally desirable when viewed in the far distance, the realisation of this wish now failed to bring altogether the anticipated satisfaction.

Whoever has read Hans Andersen's exquisite tale of the fir-tree, will understand the indescribable pathos assumed by commonplace objects as soon as they are relegated from the present tense into the past; and those who have not read this fairy tale, will understand it equally well, for is not the story of the fir-tree the history of each of our own lives?

I had indeed often longed to be back again in the world; I had yearned to be once more within

reach of newspapers and lending-libraries, and to be able to get letters from England in three days instead of six. Of course I would return to the world some day or other; but that day need not have come just yet, I now told myself, and I should have liked to spend one more summer in face of that glorious chain of mountains I had got to love so dearly.

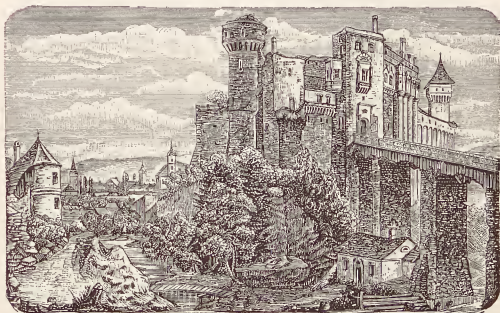


*The Cavern Convent—Skit la Jalomitza.<sup>1</sup>*

All at once I became acutely conscious of a dozen projects not yet accomplished—of points of interest as yet unvisited, of pictures I had not yet looked upon, of songs I had not heard. The proud

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from Publication of the Transylvanian Carpathian Society.

snowy Negoi I had so often dreamt of ascending, now smiled down an icy smile of unapproachable majesty upon my disappointment; the dark pine-forests I had expected to revisit seemed to grow dim and shadowy as they eluded my grasp, and with them many other objects of my secret longing. That other mountain, the Bucsecs, where



*Castle Vajda Hunyad before its restoration.*

live those solitary monks, snowed up during the greater part of the year in their cavern convent scooped out of the rock; the noble castle of the great Hunyady, pearl of medieval citadels; those wondrous salt-mines of Maros-Ujvar, whose description reads like a vision in a fairy tale; and those rivers whose waters may literally be said to "wan-

der o'er sands of gold,"—the thought of these, and of many other such items, now rose up like tormenting spectres to swell the mournful list of my blighted hopes. There were dozens of old ruined towers whose interior I had not yet seen, scores of little wayside chapels I had proposed to investigate. Why, even in this very town of Hermanstadt there were nooks and corners I had not explored, church towers I had not ascended, and mysterious little gardens as yet unvisited. Precisely the most inviting-looking of these gardens, the most mysteriously suggestive, and the one which showed the richest promise of blossom peeping over the wall, had hitherto baffled all attempts at entrance. Nearly every day for the last two years I had passed by that garden, which towered over my head like a sea-bird's nest perched on a steep rocky island, and always had I found the gate to be persistently locked against the outer world. Was I actually going to leave the place without having set foot within its enchanted precincts? without having plucked that head of golden laburnum just breaking into flower, which nodded so mockingly over the wall? and all at once an irresistible longing came over me; I felt that I *must* enter that garden, *must* gather that flower, even were it defended by dragons and witches.

And my wish did not seem to be impracticable at first sight,—the garden, as I knew, belonging to the *curé*, a jovial-faced old man, with whom I had merely a bowing acquaintance, but who, I felt sure, would be delighted to show me his garden. Accordingly one forenoon, about a week before my departure from Hermanstadt, I sent my two boys with a calling-card, on which was indited my request in the politest terms and most legible handwriting at my command.

The small messengers I had despatched to the presbytery came back even sooner than I had expected, but their mien was crestfallen, and their eyes suspiciously moist.

“What is the matter?” I asked in surprise. “Have you not brought me the key of the garden? Did not the *curé* say Yes?”

“He said nothing; we never saw him. The whole house was full of doctors and of pails of ice,” was the somewhat incoherent explanation. “And then there came an old woman with a broom and made us go away.”

Evidently the subject of the broom was too painful to be dwelt upon, for the moisture in the eyes showed symptoms of reappearing.

Further inquiries elucidated the situation. Alas! it was but too true; the *curé* had been seized with

a stroke of apoplexy that morning; and after waiting for two whole years, I had appropriately selected that very moment to request the loan of his garden key!

Two days later he died, and was buried with much pomp; and then, after waiting for three days more, I thought I might without indelicacy repeat my request, applying this time to the sacristan.

The branch of laburnum had now burst into full flower, and the more I gazed, the more absolutely impossible it seemed to leave the place without it.

This time, in consideration of the broom and the old woman, I had despatched a full-grown messenger, desiring him on no account to presume to return without the key; but the answer he brought, though polite, was yet more hopeless, and he, too, had come back empty-handed. "Have you been to the sacristan?" I sternly inquired. He had, as he humbly informed me, and not only to him, but likewise to the next priest in rank, as well as to the sister and nephew of the deceased, and to his best friend.

"The gentlemen were all very polite, and much regretted not being able to oblige me," he said; "but the garden gate had been closed with the

official seal immediately after the death, and this key, along with all others, deposited at the *Gericht* (court of justice) till a successor should be elected."

"And when will that be?"

"In about six months probably."

In six months! They dared talk to me of six months, when I should be gone before as many days! And what cared I for their hypocritical expressions of regret, now that I knew them to be dragons in disguise? Hope was now dead within me, for even British pertinacity cannot cope with supernatural agency, and expect to penetrate realms defended by witches and dragons.

Driving to the station, we passed for the last time by the impenetrable stone wall which masked the object of all this useless longing and effort, and which, like all unattainable things, looked more than ever desirable on the balmy May evening we turned our backs upon Hermanstadt. In vain my eyesight strove to penetrate the dense screen of flowery shrubs hiding from my view—I know not what. Perhaps an old temple with shattered columns, or a fountain which has ceased to play? Maybe an ancient statue draped in ivy, or a tombstone bearing some long-forgotten name?

Nought could I see but the dense-grown tops of

guelder-rose and bird-cherry pressed tightly together, and one clustering branch of overblown laburnum dropping its petals in amber showers on to the road.

Were you mocking me, or weeping for me, enigmatical golden flower? Shall I ever return to gather you?



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